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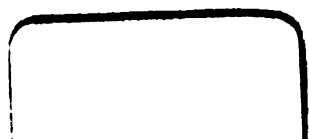
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ANOTHER
POINT OF VIEW

RODERICK LYNDON



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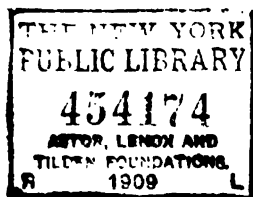
RODERICK LYNDON

LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

187 PICCADILLY, W

1908



Second Impression.

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I.

YOU tell me that if I am determined to persevere in my mad project, as you call it, you insist at all events upon my remaining in communication with yourself. Yes; I agree to that. Believe me, I am not like an angry dog that wants to fight and quarrel. I won't call myself a sad dog, because that bears a colloquial meaning very different from mine. You rather suggest that I am a cowardly dog, because I shrink from further contact with my kind; and there is some truth in that. So many and so grievous have been my wounds that I am resolved to court no more. Let me make every concession; I know, for instance, that somewhere in *The Newcomes* it

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is written, 'People who say there are no such things as friends have either been singularly unlucky, or have no hearts and don't deserve them.' Now, I cannot be singularly unlucky since I rejoice in one friendship such as yours—that alone perhaps is as much as any man should desire; but I can't admit that I was in other respects debarred by want of heart. I made you angry once by quoting Hazlitt: 'When friendship goes, bury its carcase; it is not worth embalming. Do not make a surfeit of friendship, nor expect it to last for ever.' Well, I did expect my friendships to last for ever; and when one by one they died, in spite of my wish that they should live, the growing line of gravestones daunted me. I did not try embalming, but the place was full of ghosts. So I fled . . . But again, yes, I will communicate with you from time to time, so long as you care to hear from me. Only this: you incur a heavy responsibility; you remain my one hope, my last consolation. You must not fail me in the end.

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II.

You ask me whether I am not tired of my folly, and whether I am not ashamed of myself. To the first I answer no; and if I were, I should not confess it. I am like Mrs. Poyser with her new bonnet; of course I like it; it is my folly. The second interrogation I had better overlook. . . .

This is an embryo fashionable watering-place, and, like future ornaments of fashionable life, it is at present immature and angular. The hotel is pretentious and dear; the shops are not even pretentious, and sell nothing that any human being could desire to buy. There are numerous new villas which look as if they were sorry they had come; but they are very ugly, and nobody seems in a hurry to take them, so there is no evident reason why they should not go again. There is, of course, a bandstand, but no band. As there is no audience, this doesn't matter very much. The food is distressing. I started life on coffee, which tasted like the refuse from my fireplace,

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and bread with no more flavour than paper; but I get the former from London now, and happily I made friends with a lodging-house keeper (society being limited), who was once a cook, and who makes excellent rolls, which my servant smuggles in every morning. I wonder why we English are as far behind Continental nations in these elements of life as a savage is behind a Parisian. Fish and eggs, however, can never be entirely ruined, and with my own wine I contrive to exist comfortably. My landlord is a plausible rascal: I think he means to be first Mayor; but he will have to wait. His principal client, besides myself, is an elderly spinster who plays the piano diligently. She is a bad performer, but she does her best. Familiarity breeds contempt, but I still prefer her rendering of the 'Dead March' in *Saul* to the other two pieces in her répertoire. She asked me the other day when we met on the doorstep whether I did not feel the lack of society. This made me nervous: she may have designs on me. You see I am the only male,

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apparently eligible, within range of her spectacles. Ever since then I have feigned extreme deafness when we meet, and I hope to exhaust her patience.

The country is flat and barren, as it always is along our south coast ; but the sea attracts me for the moment, and here I shall remain.

III.

It is very nice of you to inquire after my dog : thank you, he is well. I don't think he minds the ugliness of the country as much as I do ; our long walks are a source of perennial delight to him, and his excitement at the start never flags. At present he is barking with all his heart at some disconsolate pigeons that inhabit the stable-yard. They treat him with indifference, but he seems to think it is capital fun to wage war on them like this whenever he feels inclined for a little exercise. Poor little beast, if he is not eligible for heaven I am not sure that I care to go there. Let me

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go wherever I shall find devotion and loyalty such as his; I never found it in man or woman yet. Dogs can't bore you; that is their initial advantage over mankind. Even if you don't like a dog, you need not take all the trouble to avoid it that I am put to by my fellow-lodger. She is beginning to glare, by the way. I know she thinks I am stuck up; I am very sorry, I can't help it. It is rubbish to say that civility costs nothing; it would cost me hours of anguish every day if I were to be what she would consider reasonably civil.

IV.

OH, these English springs! The south and west winds appear to be entering into competition with the north and the east for pre-eminence in bitterness. I think the partnership of north and east still does the most roaring trade, but it is no longer a monopoly, and the west wind must have done

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an extensive business in mortality of late. But to-day, suddenly, all this was changed; the air was warm and soft, and gave one a good feeling in the bones. I had a tremendous walk in search of lilacs, which I love better than anything else in nature. But, like the best wine, they lose their virtue unless one gets them at the proper temperature. There isn't a respectable garden anywhere near, and I had walked many miles before I found one. Then I came abruptly on an unknown ruin; the garden was in some sort of repair, and in the orchard were may-trees and my beloved lilacs, purple and mauve and white. Of course the place was locked and barred, but I bribed the man in possession, and he let me in. Isn't it odd that this fellow should never have had the curiosity to learn what it was that he had in his charge? It shows how vacant and unimpressionable the human mind can be. I asked whether he had never heard people speak of its history. He thought a little, and then exclaimed, 'Wasn't there a King called Charles?' I said, 'Yes.' 'When did he live,

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now?' I said, 'About two hundred and fifty years ago.' 'Ah, that's 'im! Well, he came here, and then as was after him come and knocked the house to pieces, and no one ever built it up again.' Hereupon he took me into his cottage, and showed me some photographs and old records framed on the wall. I don't believe he had ever looked at them, but I found a mine of interest. After all, he is not a bad type. Plenty of our acquaintances would never go out of their way to make such a discovery, nor turn their heads to look at it if any one pointed it out. One need not leave England if beautiful scenery and venerable monuments are all you want.

We walked home by the sea nearly all the way, and even Pat was not sorry to sit down when we got here. It was a glorious evening. The white clouds which had been floating through the sky all day gathered in the west, and the setting sun tinted them with rose and gold. A great liner passed down the Channel, and I fell to moralising on the many changes of climate and race that she was to go through,

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and on all the human destinies, of supreme importance to each individual, that were hidden there on board. A little yacht was sailing about, bound no whither, the plaything probably of some easy-going gentleman who lives at home at ease. The sun went down, and the colour went out of the clouds, leaving them like masses of withered leaves, to be swept away by the next breeze. The steamer, showing lights now, went on her way. The sailing boat had drifted into the garden stairs: darker and darker grew the quiet sea, and there was nothing left but silence and the night. And I came home to my books and my solitary dinner, and by the same token to these vapourings of which you, dear lady, are to be the victim.

V.

I AM glad you have an amusing party at Ockwell. What fun we had there the year of the theatricals; I don't think I ever enjoyed

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anything more. Do you remember how amusing old Emerson was with that young prig Malvern? You can't have heard, though, the joke he cracked when the boy attacked him after dinner for mixing his wines. 'You can't drink port after champagne,' says he. 'Can't I?' says Emerson. 'Look at me; I am doing it now.' 'But they don't assimilate. Put them together in a glass, and you will see.' 'Very likely,' says Emerson, 'but I am not made of glass, though I have heard my figure described as a bow window. I have mixed my wines for a good many years, but they have never given me a pane yet.' Rather Emersonian, you'll say; but uncommonly quick. Again, when M. began a lecture about playwright being no word, playwright signifying a maker of plays, old E. extinguished him by saying, 'That gives an interesting line in tracing a pedigree: Noah's name must have been Arkwright.' What I like about him is that he always comes out with something brisk, and all done so merrily.

But last time I went there I found the

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mischievous was done. Our dear hostess had gone the way of most women, though later than some. I suppose I showed that I resented the change. 'I never see you now,' was her freezing apology; 'why is it?' I was so much astonished that I could only blurt out an imbecile, 'Because I'm not there, I suppose.'

'But you should not lose touch with people,' she went on; 'it is your own fault.'

I was getting desperate, so I said, 'I'm a social ghost now; I haunt people at awkward times, when they don't want me; it is rather fun.'

Well, I huddled away the dead bones, and tried not to care. And I used to offer her verses about friendship, which pleased her at the time.

By-the-bye, a really comic thing happened the other day. Lately I met Mrs. Jack Royston in the train between Venice and Milan, and Lady Carnew coming from Ireland. As there was nobody to take note, they were both as agreeable and friendly as they can and should be after so many years of

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acquaintance. The other day I met them driving together at the corner of St. James's Street. Each one gave me a furtive nod, and then looked to see if the other had detected her. They both belong to 'the gang,' you see, and couldn't afford to be caught recognising an outsider—as if they had revoked, and hoped they hadn't been caught. It didn't annoy me at all, though it would have done once; but it amused me to watch them trying to bluff one another when both had done the same thing. Funny people! Happily, 'the gang' is limited in numbers; but I wish they hadn't recruited your hostess.

VI.

MY fellow-lodger is on the rampage. She intercepted my sallying forth this morning to ask whether I didn't think the day quite Italian. I said yes, but she might have said German for any meaning or sense it conveyed. When she asked if I knew Italy well, I knew what she

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was driving at ; so I asked whether she did. This was her triumph. 'There is hardly a spot in Europe where I haven't set my foot.' Poor soul ! she leads that life, I suppose, only to scrape acquaintance, and to try to make interests after her own fashion. In fact, she began to expatiate on the pleasant society she found on the Continent, and, amongst other fine names, she pulled in 'The Earl of Eggington,' whom she seems to have brought down at Florence. If I had let out that he was my cousin, I don't suppose I should have had much more peace ; so I gave a sympathetic and envious sigh, and said she must find foreign countries very interesting.

VII.

I WENT to London the other day for a change. The world seemed to move much as usual, and I went to various clubs without creating any profound sensation. One person asked where I had been all this time. I said

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travelling ; but, as he did not go on to inquire where, I was spared the trouble of further ingenuity. After all, one does travel to get here. Old Emerson and Malvern were at it again. The youth was airing his old pedantries about grammar. This time he took exception to the phrase 'very pleased.' You could not use an adverb with a participle. 'For instance,' he proclaimed, 'you couldn't say, "I'm very dressed."' 'Yes, I might,' says Emerson, 'in my salad days.' I tried to get the old boy to dine, but he was engaged ; and, as there was no demand for my company, I dined alone. Alec French came and sat by me, and talked of nothing but golf. He says he has played on thirty-one courses, and gave me a careful survey of them all. Very interesting. Oswald Grove was on my other side, abusing every one as usual. He is a jealous creature, which is worse than being envious. I am envious enough ; I envy people their superior qualities and their success in life, but I don't grudge them all they have gained and got. Oswald is only jealous ; he grudges every man

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the good position and good name that he has come by, and consequently denies them if he can. He is conceited, too, which is a failing I can never understand. Vanity is natural enough—we all like to be admired and applauded ; but very few of us can comfort ourselves with the conviction that we are finer fellows than our neighbours. He does. I should have thought that no man looking about him could fail to perceive his own insignificance. By nine o'clock, then, I found myself in an armchair with a paper, wishing it was bedtime. It was too late to go to a theatre, even supposing there were any play I wanted to see, which there wasn't. I can't stand music halls and their twin-sisters, the musical plays ; they plunge me in gloom. I forget whether you are old enough to remember the days of burlesque, of Terry and Royce and Nelly Farren, and, later, of Fred Leslie. These were artists, and the plays were plays, and mighty good fun it all was. Now the plays are not plays at all, and to be a popular low comedian you must be very

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ugly and very vulgar. Don't think I run down the English Stage; on the contrary, I defend it against all comers. I always thought Irving a great actor. When I saw Cyrano de Bergerac I said I should like to see Wyndham in the part. I did see him, and admirably good he was. No; I think that all that the British Stage lacks is a thoughtful and sensitive audience. I like being touched at a theatre. People say they like to laugh, because there is so much sorrow in real life. That entirely misses the point. I don't want to see starving children and brutal or destitute parents; but I want a play that interests, that stirs sympathy and admiration and pity. I want to see the problems of life worked out, and the sacrifices undertaken, and the cant and meanness exposed. I can weep with people who are well clothed and fed, and yet are passing through grievous trials and afflictions, and I thoroughly enjoy the process. Real life is funny enough if you have any sense of humour, and a good dash of sentiment on the stage never ought to be depressing, not nearly

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so depressing as dining at a club, which is rather like a banquet in a catacomb, each man at his table like a skeleton on his shelf, with a paper to read instead of beads to tell, and nothing but sleep and silence in prospect.

VIII.

I AM delighted to have been of service to you in the matter of the hospital. Pray don't exaggerate my achievement. I took up hospital work in the hope of doing some good to my fellow-creatures, and it is rather disappointing to find how little scope there is. Therefore, when an opportunity like this occurs, it gives me genuine pleasure. Your panegyric on my 'splendid generosity' is only one degree less reprehensible. The truth is, I don't give away more than a fraction of what my means would justify. I have no expensive tastes, and nothing but a hoarding instinct prevents me from making better use of my chances of doing good. Very few of us give as we

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should, but I admit that in most cases there is merit in giving even insignificant amounts. Thackeray says, in *Vanity Fair*, 'To part with money is a sacrifice beyond almost all men endowed with a sense of order.' Some people have the giving instinct, and lavish subscriptions are no more virtuous in their case than is an act of bravery on the part of a man who is unconscious of fear. But with most people, to contribute a pound to a charitable fund is a definite sacrifice; it is so much easier to keep it in case you want to ask some one to dinner, or in order to cover your next railway expenses. Any one who is really generous has, therefore, the virtue of a man who does brave actions in spite of the aversion of fear.

No: I wish I could see my way to be more useful. Oswald Grove the other night asked me, in his most irritating way, what I found to do now that I was out of Parliament. He had got on to my nerves, and I committed what I hope is a rare indecency with me—I was deliberately rude. 'I have my own business and I mind that,' was my answer. But

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it is such an irritating question, and people are so narrow-minded. One good lady the other day said, 'You must miss the busy life of the House of Commons.' I replied, 'I never was more busy there than a doorkeeper at the National Gallery,' and I tried to explain that, by the nature of the case, about seventy men must have the speaking parts, and the other six hundred or so must rest content to be supers. I pointed out that to hang about for an average of eight hours a day idle, and debarred from attempting occupation, was little better than the life of a sandwich-man in the street. She would not have it, and wanted to know, of course, what was my present occupation. I was civil, and tried to justify my theory of existence; but it was no good. 'In fact, you muddle away your time,' was her conclusion of the whole matter. Anyhow, it is better to muddle it away pleasantly than to waste it wholesale in gloom and bitterness of spirit.

People, of course, would have nothing but contempt for me if they knew that I devote

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a great deal of my time to literary endeavours. Why? Let us admit that I shall never succeed, neither should I ever have succeeded in politics; and again, I say it is better to fail in a congenial task than in one which is utterly irksome and rather humiliating.

IX.

WHAT you say about writing is true, I think, up to a point. The question is how can one tell whether one possesses the vocation of an author. A writer must surely serve his apprenticeship as well as any other craftsman; who is to decide where diligence and perseverance cease and idle waste of time begins? Froude says that to most people a life of speculation means a life of uselessness and idleness. We can't all be Froudes, but I don't see why one should not try whether one cannot win a place in the ranks. The worst of it is one must have the audience of a professional; not an amateur. One may sing

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well enough to give pleasure in a drawing-room, or paint well enough to have one's work desired by one's friends; but a writer must appeal to the world at large.

‘ One cannot sing for ever, like a bird,
For sole delight of singing ! ’

After all, the public must be the judges. If they will read your books, or so long as publishers will produce them at their own risk, all is well. Your work is justified in the first case and your ambition in the second. Even if the publisher loses his money, as he very likely does, and you make nothing, as you will probably find to be the case, you can say that you have a market of sorts. But when you pay to see yourself in print and the public don't pay to share the enterprise, your position is not very easy to justify. And yet, who can tell? Success may come after long ‘ knocking at preferment's door.’ It may be urged that for so mediocre an artist there is no need. Very likely; but if we never attempted anything because we feared not to excel, there would be very little motive left for endeavour.

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X.

THE longer I live aloof like this, the more I am struck by the large part that cant plays in our social arrangements. There are certain hypocrisies so common that one overlooks them. There isn't much nonsense talked about art, because pictures are not in fashion just now; but music!—Heaven help us! what a lot of gush one hears. Of late years it has been one of the necessary marks of polite breeding. The opera, and the newest singer, and the concert most advertised in the Society papers, these are the things to make a fuss about. Nobody will hesitate to profess a devotion to music—nor to jabber without ceasing in a drawing-room during singing, unless the hostess forbids it. I don't think any one is entitled to profess to be musical who has not taken trouble to acquire some technical knowledge. I never knew a devotee yet in any category who had not instinctively acquired a certain amount of information to guide and cultivate his or her taste.

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Children and dogs are responsible for a great deal of rubbish and humbug : none of us dare deny that we are fond of them : pretty, clean, amusing children with good manners—yes, of course ; but why should one pretend to like ugly, noisy, obtrusive, ill-mannered children, who are in the way when they are not wanted and generally play the devil with domestic peace ? Your real child-lover is the one who is even attracted by the dirty brats squalling in our slums. Heaven knows, they need our sympathy ; the mere fact of their existence ought to sadden all our lives.

In the matter of dogs : I am no dog-hater ; my own dog is, I sometimes think, dearer to me than any living thing ; but that does not make me pretend that I like big, slobbering, aggressive dogs, or noisy and restless dogs, or wheezy, goggle-eyed dogs, or shivering, lizard-like dogs, nor am I otherwise than disgusted when I see a man make a nuisance of his dog, or a woman make more fuss of hers than she does of her own children. In fact, I love to listen to a pretty song well sung, or to a good

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string band, yet I am not musical. I become lyrical or maudlin, if you please, about that beautiful boy of yours; yet I hesitate to protest that I am fond of children—I am, perhaps, too fond of my friend Pat—yet I am certainly not devoted to dogs. And if, when I am asked, ‘Are you musical?’ ‘Are you fond of children?’ ‘Are you fond of dogs?’ I don’t immediately give a comprehensive yes, I am regarded as a savage. Cant is the thing: some one calls the tune and we have to join in the chorus, if we are to be any longer deemed respectable.

XI.

Hangmer Park.

I LEFT my embryo Brighton suddenly and came here. The parting was quite romantic. My dear fellow-sojourner appeared on the scene with a suspiciously red nose. She had been crying, I am sure; but what about? At first a beautiful illusion came over me: my

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hour had arrived—I was loved. I hastened to assure myself that this was fully as gratifying as it would have been had she been Venus herself; but she proceeded to give me the addresses of two acquaintances, or possibly disavowed relatives, of whom one did type-writing and the other knitted socks, and both sought custom. She added something cryptic about my influential friends, and it occurred to me that the good creature had been browsing in her Peerage, which no doubt she carries with her, and had discovered my affinity with Egginton. So I had to give up the love theory and put her tears down to vexation. I was ‘related to a peer’ she had let slip through her fingers. Or why should she not have been feeling lonely and unhappy and friendless? Likely enough, poor soul—that idea nearly did draw me out. However, she quenched the spark just as it was kindled by saying that she hoped to travel on the Continent later in the year, and that perhaps we might meet there; which was a silly observation.

I came here suddenly. Lady Susan wrote

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to say that she wanted to go somewhere or other: Jack had hurt his knee and did not like being left alone. She could not get him a companion anywhere; would I mind coming? She did not add, 'P.S.—You are better than nothing,' and I am not proud, even if I am touchy; moreover, I have always been fond of Jack, so I came. It is a most amusing study of human nature: ever since we were at Eton he has treated me like a cushion or a doormat, and I suppose he always will. He finds me, moreover, a convenient receptacle for whatever humours he wants to dispose of. His selfishness is so naïve and unconscious. All day long he is saying, Wouldn't you like to do this, or see that?—which means that he would like it, and takes it for granted that every one else is of the same mind. He has taken it into his head that whisky is the only wholesome thing to drink, and little else do I get. I, on the other hand, hate whisky, and he inherited one of the best cellars in England. Of course I could have any wine I liked to ask for and be welcome; but as he doesn't care about good

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wine, he is not likely to reflect that other people do. If this were stinginess, I would make extravagant demands at once ; as it is, I prefer to suffer in dignified silence—perhaps it is better than being asked what you would like to drink. I always feel inclined to say, ‘The best you have got.’ It generally means, ‘Please say whisky, or, better still, cold water.’ Let people give me what they think proper, and I am content and grateful.

Our only strife is over a fire in the room where we sit: this I insist on when the mornings are cold and wet. Jack says I am a stuffy brute ; I try to persuade him that if it is wrong to light a fire to warm your room when it is cold, it is equally wrong to open a window to cool it when it is hot ; but he says I talk like an idiot.

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XII.

JACK made me laugh to-day. It rained all the morning. After breakfast he suddenly exclaimed, 'I tell you what we will do; we will go through all the accounts for last year, and see how much stables and gardens and shooting separately cost.' I had plenty of my own work to do, but of course I agreed, and for several hours I waded in figures. In the end we had as business-like a statement as ever you saw. At lunch we talked of an old acquaintance of ours, and I said it was always a puzzle to me how he carried on; he lived in princely style, and I could not see where his income came from. Up comes Jack: 'What an inquisitive beggar you are; you gossip like an old woman at a tea-table. What has his income got to do with you?' I felt sorely tempted to rap out, 'No more than your confounded accounts;' but I didn't. I don't suppose it ever crossed his mind that his affairs could bore other people, and he is constitutionally incapable of interesting himself in

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what concerns anybody else. He is equally remarkable in his conduct towards his children. The eldest boy is a replica of his father: a tough, bold little man, who will spend his entire life in the pursuit of birds and beasts and fishes, and never have another idea in his head. The younger one is a nervous, delicate child, cast in a very different mould. Lady Susan makes a certain amount of fuss about him when she has time, but it can't be a really sympathetic alliance until he is old enough to play bridge. Jack doesn't dislike him; but he doesn't understand him, and, of course, doesn't try. 'Not much of a chap' is his comment. His son and heir of course he adores. I met the little one in the garden just now.

'Where are your father and brother?' I asked.

'Gone to the stables,' says he.

'And you didn't go?' I hazarded.

His answer was simple enough, but his voice and his glance at me spoke several volumes: 'Two's company.'

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‘Then you and I will be company,’ I said ;
‘come on.’ And a more amusing companion
I never wish to have.

Jack hurts this boy every day and every hour without intending it. I suppose it is part of the law of compensation that children should suffer so acutely. Grown-up people—most of them—lose their sensitiveness and become indifferent to little troubles when big ones begin ; but I doubt whether any anguish is more distressing than that of a child when the things he cares about go wrong. The reason is that they have not acquired self-control. That is also the reason why I think it pardonable when a child tells a lie in his own defence, and wonderful when he doesn’t ; the effort of self-sacrifice must be immense. I believe a child’s grief over a broken toy is as bitter at the moment as a man’s grief over a dead wife. This helpless susceptibility only remains with us in our dreams. We all know what it is to wake up laughing or crying ; and for really hideous terror commend me to the paroxysms of a nightmare.

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XIII.

I ACTUALLY made an incursion into the gay world the other day. I happened to meet the Duchess of Leicestershire in a picture gallery one morning; she seemed uncommonly pleased to see me, and asked me to dine, a thing she had not done for several years. I went, and found myself let in for a juvenile party arranged for Lady Belford's ball. I felt very much like a mute at a carnival, but I tried to look cheerful. Dinner was not bad. I took in a very nice woman. I don't know who she was, and could not find out. I had never seen her before, and I have no doubt she is new since my day. Her name conveyed nothing, but she was so easy to talk to that I am sure she was an American. On my other side was a lovely young lady, less easy of access. She never spoke to me, but made such a noise that I was able to profit by her conversation with her neighbour, a sprightly young Guardsman, as smart and good-looking as it is possible to be. Their

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chief interests appeared to be the shape of somebody's nose and the size of somebody else's feet; the latter individual she spoke of as Captain Molly—a curious name. They laughed a great deal, but it would be very difficult to say why—high spirits, I suppose. I don't think she has nice manners, but I couldn't help admiring the back of her head and her shoulder; and as she is favourably mentioned every week in *Belle's Letters* I have no doubt she is a source of pleasure and pride to her mamma. The boy was a little gentleman. When the ladies had gone he talked away at me with the utmost goodwill, all about polo, of which I know nothing. I liked him so much that I wanted to ask him to dinner; but I thought it would not be fair. He would not want to come, and if he had not taken the trouble to be civil, he would not have incurred the nuisance.

The ball wasn't so successful. I used to delight in dancing. I feel now that I never want to dance again. However, every one ought to go through the phase. It is a natural

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instinct for a girl, and if a young man avoids that form of society altogether he is in danger of a career which ends in an impossible marriage. Johnny Fletcher and Bob Snow were cases in point ; they both made a pose of not caring about polite life. One, as you know, chose his wife from a music-hall, and the other from circles still less eligible for presentation at Court. Yes, it is a healthy pastime for persons of unripe age ; and the beauty and the music and the jewellery, and the rest of it, constitute one of the most attractive features in this extremely artificial and ornate existence of ours.

I hung about and looked on for an hour or so, and took Mrs. Armevne to supper. She professed herself delighted to see me ; but inasmuch as she asked two men to dine, in my hearing, and did not ask me, although neither of them could go, her satisfaction did not appear to be inexhaustible.

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XIV.

THIS cottage is exactly what I want, and I am like a child with a new toy. Your London season is a chronological expression, which no longer conveys anything to me. I have a river at the foot of my garden, and great hills beyond, and masses of trees; so that there are the three necessary elements of beauty—trees, hills, and water. These long evenings give me more intense enjoyment, I think, than those rollicking nights twenty years ago, when I was rather a popular young gentleman in London. My task goes on apace; I drown myself daily in ink, and get engulfed in books of reference, and am deeply interested and serenely happy.

My only acquaintance is the parson. He says he remembers me at Cambridge. I can't return the compliment. He is ugly and angular, but a dear good man. He has a sickly, querulous wife, and a daughter with corkscrew curls, a heavy lip, and adenoids. To both of these ladies he is devotedly at-

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tached. He dines with me often. My cook, as you may suppose, is not expected to achieve great feats, but I don't think he is critical. He has drunk more champagne, I suppose, since I have been here than ever he did in his life before. His enjoyment is a sight to behold. He warms and expands, and the more outspoken he becomes the better I like and respect him. After each of these banquets he is a little stiff and shy : I have no doubt that in his simple mind he accuses himself of having exceeded : I always settle this by asking him to come again : repentance, remorse, resolutions, and relapse go revolving merrily, and he makes no change in his habits. His recreations appear to be flying about the country like a lunatic, brandishing a butterfly-net, and crawling about his garden, planting or uprooting, on which occasions he protects his head with a straw hat which he may well have borrowed from a scarecrow. He is such a gentleman, too. One day he said he wanted me to break bread in his house, and begged me to come to lunch. Of course I went.

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The wife was obviously dissatisfied and nervous, expecting me to abuse everything, and herself abusing the wretched parlourmaid in low asides. The girl gazed at me and breathed hard. There was a bottle of claret—from the grocer's, no doubt. I dare say she had been sent to fetch it, and she watched its consumption as if it were conjurer's fire. But he was not in the least put out: talked gaily all the time, and did not commit the obvious impropriety of apologising for his poor fare, and thanking me for coming. That is what a mean soul would have done; but he isn't a mean soul. In fact, he is a great deal more refined than many of our acquaintance, and is a prodigious lover of poetry. His pet aversion is Mr. Rudyard Kipling. 'How can you call a man a great poet who degrades his mother tongue?' he demanded one night after dinner, as we sat smoking. I had done nothing of the kind, by the way, but I didn't interrupt him. 'Take his precious "Barrack-room Ballads,"' says he: 'why, pieces like "Troopin'" or "Loot" make me scream. It is not English

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at all; it is the hideous jargon of the slums, and the jingle of words bears about as much resemblance to poetry as a hurdy-gurdy does to a cathedral organ. He has fine ideas like "The English Flag" and "The Ballad of East and West," but even there he rambles into a kind of thumping jingoism with a lot of stuff about "Irish liars' bandages" and "English cowards' shirts," which means nothing at all. And he has pretty notions like "Mandalay," but he spoils that too. "Beefy face an' grubby 'and"—isn't that phrase enough to damn any poem? And what on earth does he mean by the dawn "coming up like thunder"? Dawn might come up like lightning, but it surely can't come up like thunder. And "La Nuit Blanche" in "Departmental Ditties": oh, lord! oh, lord! that might be forgiven to Adam Lindsay Gordon, who was a poet right enough, but admittedly trained on a diet of husks which the outcasts have to eat: but for a great English poet, sir—it's sheer beastliness, that is what it is. The people are bewitched: it is the music-hall in print;

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melodrama in rhyme. He is a war-correspondent wasted. Let him make his canteen songs, but don't talk to me about making him Poet-Laureate. Whatever people may say, Alfred Austin has written a great deal more that is true to his art than ever this man did. They never read Austin, and they condemn him unheard. Why, I'd give all Kipling's cockneydoms for a poem like "The March Minstrel"—

"Scorning to wait for tuneful May,
When every throat can sing ;
'Thou floutest Winter with thy lay,
And art thyself the Spring."

You will say, perhaps, that lay isn't the right word : I dare say it isn't ; I don't mean that his technique is perfect and isn't often slovenly, but there is the spirit of spring in those lines. I find myself repeating them whenever I hear a bird whistling on some bitter day in March. It stirs one's blood and warms one's heart, and makes—why, it makes even me a poet.' Then he stopped suddenly and lit his cigar, which

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had gone out whilst he waved it about. He looked a very comic little figure with his sandy hair and whiskers and his snub nose : less like a poet than my faithful William, and yet even so much more impressive than any elegant dilettante could have been.

By-the-bye, I don't think my faithful William approves of this manoeuvre of mine ; he hankers after the fleshpots of London and his club—I know he belongs to a servants' club, but I forget which and where. I have reconciled him to some extent by arranging for him to fish, which he does with more assiduity than success.

XV.

I HAVE made another acquaintance ; a whole circle of them. Once when I was travelling in Germany, my companion asked his servant what he thought of the country. ' It's a very odd thing, sir ; I don't see any gentlemen's 'ouses.' Which was a natural and

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rather shrewd reply. 'Gentlemen's 'ouses' are the first characteristic of our land. Has it never struck you as curious that there are so many really fine and dignified mansions along any railway line you may follow. I have always wondered who are their owners. They must be considerable people: yet they are probably quite unknown in the 'little parish of St. James's which we call the world.' I can only identify them with the people one sees on the stage and reads of in novels. You will find them in any tale of Wilkie Collins's; quite important people in their way, but somehow unlike any social units with which one has come in contact. My experience is in process of being widened. There are two 'gentlemen's 'ouses' here: one, a charming stone building, of which a part must be very old, belongs to a Mr. Darbyshire. He represents a venerable county family, and I believe he is 'as proud as a peer with a new title or a baronet with an old one.' He has not discovered what a treasure lies at his very gate, and I only see the family in Church, where they are extremely

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decorative. The other house belongs to Mr. Selby : it is very big and red and new, like a fine baby, with the same pronounced baldness. Unlike the baby, it is all chimney-pots and bogus gargoyles and meaningless excrescences, with a huge coat-of-arms triumphant in the midst : but never an inch of creeping plant to cover its nakedness. Mr. Selby made a great fortune out of a gum syndicate, and suffers I think from desire to be a managing director of the county. His daughter is full of enterprise, and discovered me. I tried to take the edge off their interest by declining their invitations, but apparently I sharpened it instead, and it ended in my dining there. The young lady is like a powder-puff, very fluffy, and suggestive of nothing but a toilet-table. The mother is a terrific lady, very large and good-natured and voluble. Mr. Selby is the sort of man who obviously must succeed in his own line of life, and fail in any other, because he is entirely unadaptable. He must be master, and I don't suppose he ever deferred to any one since he was an office-boy. Yet he has the inevitable

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instinct for rank, partly adulation, partly
envy—

‘ . . . rough to common men,
But honeying at the whisper of a lord ’—

and souring if the lord is silent.

I gathered these ideas by watching him in Church—for which I hope I may be forgiven. Mr. Darbyshire is very sedate, rather pompous perhaps, and evidently intent upon his relations with the Almighty. Mr. Selby is restless and aggressive, and equally intent on his relations with Mr. Darbyshire, whom he eyes continually, and by whom he is entirely ignored. It appears that the original jealousy was inflamed last year, when the Lord-Lieutenant came to open a drill-hall near here. Mr. Selby wrote and asked him to be his guest; he naïvely replied that he had written to ask his old friend Darbyshire to take him in. I don't know whether this was intended for a snub, nor whether Mr. Selby is capable of being snubbed: anyhow, he was very angry. My friend the parson told me all this.

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As I said, I dined there. It was a desperate business. It is the ugliest house in point of decoration and contents that I ever was in, and I was called upon to admire everything. I was asked whether one room did not remind me of the Alhambra. I said yes: but I meant the music-hall. The pictures probably cost thousands, and would sell at Christie's for shillings. That is no condemnation in itself, because a modern picture may be good and pleasing, and yet have no market value; but these were vulgar, bad specimens of their generation. The dinner was sumptuous, and they could not understand my small eating powers. My hostess pressed each dish on me, and it required great self-control to keep my temper and not tell her that I did not want her food, and did not mean to eat it. The Powder Puff kept us all going. Her mind appears to be as fluffy as her head. She goes in for being intellectual, but her aspiration is as remote as that of the moth for the star. She professes admiration for intellect in others to the end that people may admire it in her.

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She has read a little ; thought not at all ; and the diet has only set up mental indigestion. Her brother was there : he is in a cavalry regiment, where I am sure he has been bullied, because he bullies every one at home : conceit and vulgarity can never be kicked out of any man. There was also a cousin, a professional wag, with a large acquaintance in the lower ranks of theatrical life ; a frequenter of restaurants. Of these he discourses as some men do of duchesses and the Turf Club, with the difference that whereas the latter are considered snobs, he is regarded as the devil of a fellow. I generally look upon bridge after dinner as a confession of failure ; a sign that conversation is beyond the capacity of the company, and that pleasant intercourse is neither attempted nor comprehended. On this occasion it came as a blessed relief. It relegated a certain number of tiresome people to social annihilation. My hostess did not play, and could not understand why I did not ; she thought that 'no London gentleman was happy without his game of cards ;' she did not

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know how her young people would get through their evenings without it—and I was unable to enlighten her. It was an instructive adventure.

XVI.

You say my last letter was very ill-natured: I don't think it was. These good people only invited me out of curiosity, to see what I was like; I did not want to go, and as I had to submit to the scrutiny, it was no outrage to return the compliment. You may be sure that they criticised me no less frankly; the son displayed a fine contempt at once, and the father regarded me as nothing but a witness of his affluence. The Powder Puff was amusing and the mother amiable, and I shall bear none of them malice if they leave me alone in future, but they pursue me with invitations to croquet day after day, and refuse to be comforted. Meanwhile, I have been to lunch with Mr. Darbyshire, and the contrast between the two

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families would afford a treatise on manners. The atmosphere is different: not only the tone of the conversation, but the tones of the voices. The father is as unconcernedly oblivious of his neighbour as Mr. Selby is restlessly watchful of him. The daughter is sympathetic and quiet. They treat me with courtesy, and are hospitable, but neither effusive nor inquisitive. Here at least is a 'gentleman's 'ouse.' It is not unlike the stage picture of which I spoke: the difference is that in plays there is always a plot, and in real life there is none. If you could introduce here the necessary elements of romance, intrigue, villainy and low comedy, it would make a charming setting for your drama. As it is, the scenery is admirable, and the story entirely dull. It is edifying, moreover, to observe the different treatment which these two families bestow on my friend the parson: kindness and respect in one case, condescension and buffoonery in the other. He has been dining with me again and haranguing about religion. His is a most enviable frame of

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mind. He does not think that he is saved and everybody else damned sempiternally, but that whosoever puts implicit faith in Christ cannot but be saved. He illustrated his meaning by the analogy of taking a ticket for a ship, and knowing that without any effort on his part he will certainly be landed by the ship's captain at his ultimate goal. I had not the heart to point out that this is not an invariable certainty, and that he himself might set the ship on fire. A mind with that conviction is truly to be envied. I sometimes have a secret envy for the irreligious man, to whom the whole matter is indifferent. I know his weakness: '*Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer*,' as Voltaire admitted; or as I have seen it paraphrased—

“ Did God not fashion me ? ” the sceptic cries in doubt ;

“ Then I must fashion Him : I cannot live without. ” ’

In his hour of crisis and of trial perhaps his anguish will be intense ; but for the present he

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rejoices in an untroubled spirit. It is the half-and-halfers who are to be pitied; who wander in a circle and a maze of perplexity. Most of us are not without faith, but neither are we without a heavy burden of self-reproach: and the worst of it is that we know we do not mean to amend our ways. I may break fewer commandments than my neighbour: I have no inducement to steal or murder; I may perhaps have a better record as regards the politer vices; but I lead a selfish life, obeying none of the direct and urgent appeals of Christ, and I have no intention of making heroic efforts. I pray for all sorts and conditions of men, and bestow all that I possess on myself. My benevolence is vicarious: I sacrifice practically nothing for mankind, and don't intend to: how dare I then say that it doesn't matter: Christ sacrificed himself for me so that I need not bother? I may believe in God's infinite mercy, but I know very well I don't deserve it. Even when things seem best with me; on a glowing day amongst these quiet hills, or at evening beside my smooth garden stream:

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when it seems impossible that there can be trouble or peril or strife in the world, and that we were only put here to enjoy ourselves and be merry ; even then my accusing spirit cries out against me. I think of the panorama of human misery beyond ; of my power to help and of my failure to do anything ; of the shifts and changes of life, and I say, 'Thou fool, this night . . .' It will be too late then. Ah me : I wish I had the simple confidence of my friend the parson.

XVII.

SINCE I last wrote to you, my friend the parson has got into sad trouble. It appears that in the absence of any one more desirable, he received a summons from Miss Selby to make a fourth for croquet. Thither he went as proud as a peacock, with a new Panama hat which I had given him. He is not a skilful performer and the situation was already a little strained, when in an evil moment he caught

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sight of a rare butterfly. Down went his mallet and off went he, hat in hand, making frantic flaps. As bad luck would have it, his devoted career led him into what the Powder Puff is pleased to call her Garden of Friendship. I don't know what she means : I think she got the idea from some book or Society paper ; nor do I know how or why it symbolises friendship ; unless it be that it requires a great deal of artificial tending to keep it in full bloom. But inasmuch as all this attention is bestowed by her father's gardeners, the sentiment, such as it is, attaches principally to them. Anyhow, the reverend man went prancing into this bower of beautiful illusion, trampling down her friends in fine style. Needless to say he had never been represented in the sacred enclosure in the spirit, and his violent irruption in the flesh was downright sacrilege. He came and dined with me afterwards, and made me scream with laughter, though he thought it the most serious thing in the world. He was honestly contrite and said he was afraid that the young lady had felt it very much. She

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had a sensitive nature and it was terrible to think what pain he must have given her. He was so much in earnest that I left off laughing and tried to console him. Then he began to talk about women, of whom he knows as much as I know about the stars. He waxed ardent over his own happy state, the perfection of his wife and the blessings he enjoyed in the person of his daughter. It was quite touching. Suddenly he exclaimed, 'I wonder how it is that you have never married.' It was like a blow in the face. He was not inquisitive or impertinent: it was only the simplicity of an *enfant terrible*. I said something vague, and he went off in a rhapsody upon the emptiness of an unmarried life, and the fulness of joy in a happy union. As you know, I keep my wound decently covered up, and never now let people see how badly scarred I am; but he made me feel that the laceration is as deep and sore as ever it was, and that the healing process has not yet begun.

I think that women are usually more considerate than men: yet when they love

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they are entirely self-centred, and when they have ceased to love they are pitiless. It is my conviction that if I had wrecked another person's happiness, I should be sorry; and whether I was to blame or not, I should do all in my power to make amends. All that there is in me of gentleness and delicacy would be forthcoming, if occasion offered, to try and soothe the pain which I had given. Apparently a woman forgets all about it; or else, having ceased to care, pretends that she has forgotten, and is irritated when her memory is stirred. I can scarcely credit my senses when I see her now: it is difficult to believe that the same spirit animates the same being; or that what has been is not a phantom of my brain. I know nothing of metaphysics and cannot examine the theories of matter and mind; but there must be some human element which united us once by ties so close and strong that they were almost physical, and which by ceasing to exist has altered the world we live in, and we two who live in it. Did I love her, or only an abstraction which by some unknown

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process became identified with her? I love that abstraction still, and I cherish with painful fidelity every scrap and fragment which preserves it for me. I would crawl on my hands and knees to London now only to see her pass by ; and yet I am very near to hating her. A word or a glance when we met would have left me my ideal to inspire me ; I could have been comfortably miserable and full of indulgence. As it is, my ideal is blown away ; I am estranged from all my kind ; a rather soft heart has become as hard and cold as a rock ; and I swear to trust no human being again. That blank indifference and airy civility, such as she might have had for an old servant, changed the current of my blood ; but not even she can destroy the lordly treasure-house which she once built and stored for me. It is all that I have left.

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XVIII.

It was a great pleasure to have a glimpse of you in London, although it was not much more than that. You can't imagine what a whirl of life it all appeared to me in contrast with my sheepish existence here. Your house was like a brisk scene on the stage ; a quick entrance, rattling talk, a sudden exit, without a moment's pause. I felt as busy and restless as any of them ; and here I am again blinking at the sunshine and wondering when I shall feel inclined to stir. . . It ended in my having to get up to hunt for a quotation, which came into my head :

' No, 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits get upcurled
Until they crumble . . . '

That is it : that is the ordeal of London. I had to dine of course at a club, and by bad luck I came alongside Oswald Grove again. He was abusing everybody and everything as usual, with the notable exception of himself

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and all his works. As Emerson says, if he were invited to heaven, he would complain that it was too far from the station. I spent my evening in watching bridge. Why, should you say, do people play? Because they like it: yes; but if cards be such a pleasant pastime how comes it that nobody cares to play except for money? Take games. Personally I don't consider any game is worthy of the name which does not involve violent exercise, such as cricket or lawn tennis, which you can't play alone, and in which you have an opponent constantly riposting: you don't play these for money. But take occupations; people play croquet without money interest: and even that dismal ordeal, billiards. They never play cards for the love of the thing. You may say the same of racing: but there you compete with the professional gambler. The majority of people go racing, not for the love of horses or love of sport, but for the sake of excitement or greed of gain. People in polite life don't usually prey on one another's purses, and if a man were known to go to houses for the

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deliberate purpose of winning money, he would be cut. Yet you see ladies and gentlemen spending all their leisure time round card-tables, trying to win from one another. I think the heroes of Crockford's played avowedly for loot. Probably the same spirit animates the present generation, but we are too punctilious to confess it. There is plenty of the predatory savage left in us: else why do we hunt and shoot? Nobody would fire a gun if all the pheasants and partridges were cardboard dummies, though they might be quite as difficult to hit. One never seeks sporting recreation in filling one's larder with other necessary things. Why not a pig-drive with a pea-rifle? It would be exciting enough; especially for the neighbours. I am very glad I dislike cards: I tried to get an interest in patience once, but it seemed great waste of time. It was like keeping an account of the spending of my own pocket-money: what can that matter to me or any one else? So with patience; what does it matter if the cards turn up in the right order: or, if they don't,

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what does it matter if one manipulates them ? My object in going into society was to meet pleasant people. The pleasantest form of society in my opinion is general conversation in the evening : not the horrid system of making people sit in pairs after dinner, regardless of congeniality, and pump up an hour's desultory gossip with one eye apiece upon the clock. Several spirits in contact usually produce something worth attention : at all events they are spared the effort of a single-handed struggle. If, as I think I have remarked before, the company in general are dull beyond redemption, then cards cover their nakedness of mind : but it does seem to me the negation of sociability to collect a party, presumably sympathetic, and then, at the hour of day which should be sacred to conviviality, to set them down to their game, and regard as an outcast any one who does not appreciate their carnival of silence.

I discoursed to you recently upon cant : there is another common cant which I detest, namely, this : Every one pretends to depre-

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cate gossip, and it is the stock formula that one should talk of things and not people. Rubbish! One's neighbours, the human beings with whom one is brought into daily contact, are surely as interesting as any abstract proposition. Perhaps your moralist would say that it is elevating and respectable to discuss the indiscretions of the latest heroine of fiction, and immoral and improper to criticise the conduct of a woman playing with all her soul her appointed rôle in real drama before your eyes. I used to know a very nice woman who often said that she had met some interesting acquaintances whose conversation was not all personal, like that of most people. I tested her frequently by starting some impersonal topic, and in five minutes or less she was always back at the heels of some individual. And I did not blame her. It is no easy matter for two people to maintain a dialogue upon an idea or a principle unless their intelligence is considerable on both sides, or unless they possess some special interest in common; whereas everybody is interested in people—

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except the absolutely selfish, who care for no one but themselves. In general conversation it is not so difficult to keep an interest afloat, because you have more minds at work, but general conversation, alas! does not exist any more. The few eminent personages I was privileged to know in my days upon earth were great gossips, and took an undisguised pleasure in examining and criticising the actions of people, no matter how trivial they might seem to be. To be honest, most of us would admit that it bored them to hear 'things' debated. A man or woman who talks of 'things' is usually voted a prig or a bore, so that it comes to this: if you talk of yourself you are an egotist; if you talk of other people you are a gossip; if you talk of things you are a prig and a bore. Perhaps one had better play for safety, and nod, like Lord Burleigh, or live on the void and half-finished utterances which won for Lord Balbie Drone an entirely undeserved reputation for profundity, as related in that admirable novel, *The Boudoir Cabal*.

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XIX.

I AM clearly committed now to this existence: here I am absorbed in parochial interests, and expecting them to interest you. It is Sunday, but there is much to disturb my rest—if such be needed after six days of idleness. There has been a sad to-do here. The Powder Puff has gone in for ‘High Church,’ it appears. Who told her of it, or where she got the idea, I don’t know. Her notions are cloudy, but by way of making her position triumphantly secure, she must needs buy a prodigious altar-cloth and send it to my friend the parson. No sooner is this gorgeous integument displayed than it transpires that Mr. Darbyshire regards any approach to ritual or ornament as a pronounced overture to the devil. During the morning service on the Sunday when the cloth first appeared, it was what Mr. Pepys used to call ‘pretty to see’ the seraphic postures of the Powder Puff on one side of the aisle and the rigid attitude of protest of Mr. Darbyshire upon the other. In

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the afternoon he wrote a perfectly urbane but emphatic demand for the removal of the accursed thing, which the poor parson brought to me. He intuitively looks upon Mr. Darbyshire as the parishioner whose opinions and wishes deserve most consideration, but not being troubled with strong inclinations of his own in either direction, his thoughts take a practical turn in the direction of Mr. Selby's value as a giver of donations. If he were to return the Powder Puff's gift, where would her father's name be on the subscription lists? We don't move fast in these parts; negotiations were proceeding with great deliberation, and I was enjoying my diplomatic exercises mightily, when a complication was brought about by the appearance of a strange preacher this morning. He came on behalf of a London East-end Mission, and, like so many of those devoted and excellent worthies, his enthusiasm finds an outlet in all the embellishments which can stimulate or satisfy emotion. How he proposed to array himself I don't understand; according to my friend the parson, who is

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distracted, he wanted to get himself up as if he was in the ante-room of a Turkish bath, in a loose white robe with a rope round his waist. It appears that, with or without the Bishop's leave, he and his friends have founded a private brotherhood of their own. After a spirited argument he appears to have given way ; my friend shrewdly intimated that anything of this kind would be fatal to his collection. But he made up for it by vagaries of other kinds. Throughout the service he bobbed about like a Jack-in-the-box. Whenever he saw a chance of bowing or crossing himself or varying the ritual, or, generally speaking, performing any antic which is customary in the Church of Rome and not customary with us, he set to it with a will. The Powder Puff was in elegant ecstasies ; Mr. Darbyshire looked like the marble effigy of his ancestor in the chancel. Well, here is the fat in the fire with a vengeance, and, of course, it is I that must get it out.

But this does not cause my present trouble of spirit. Notwithstanding his signings and

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his genuflections, and other devotional exercises, the stranger was a mighty fine preacher; he had the gift of tongues and lungs in abundance, and he astonished our drowsy congregation. His sermon was like a chapter of Zola, and it made me feel ill. The astonishing part of it remained for the end, when he denounced charity and all her works; according to him, charitable organizations were brutal and demoralising, hypocritical on the part of the giver and degrading to the receiver. But what does he want? He asks for the exercise of Christian sympathy and communion, but this village can't emigrate bag and baggage and go slumming. I know from experience that I have no aptitude and no instinct for that kind of work; I am awkward, constrained, and wholly unsympathetic. And now I am told that my money is not wanted. I cannot but believe that if I hear of a starving family I do better to send a sovereign than a message of condolence, no matter how sincere, and that they would rather have my money than a visit, in the

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course of which I should probably appear intrusive or patronising. As a matter of fact I hate begging sermons; I know all the facts, and my knowledge overshadows my life. I always admit I don't give away enough, but even if I did I should be powerless to remove this awful incubus. I only put sixpence into the plate to-day on principle. What I may give deliberately is another matter. I intend to send the parson a cheque for his charities, and he can have something for this, as he may for any other object in which he is interested. I don't think I am any the better for being made miserable. I watch the play of the clouds upon the hills, and listen to the summer all round me. I feel as if I were part of it, and that it quickens in me whatever I may possess of grace and goodness. It is difficult to believe that this is vicious self-indulgence; anyhow, I know that I have not the character and devotion to exchange it for a missionary life. It seems as if it were wrong to be happy. If things are well with us, and we are ready to thank God for his bountiful

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gifts, the vision of misery rises up and turns our gladness into sorrow and foreboding. Guilty pleasure is one thing, innocent happiness is another, yet it seems as if the latter were as reprehensible as the former, and that even to have a contented spirit is to sin against the light. Only those who are perfectly callous and hard-hearted can hope to pass their days in peace. The preacher said that any infidel or worshipper of heathen deities looking upon the condition of East London might well deny the existence of our God. He might go on to declare that if they knew of the squabbles and dissensions that vex our little community, such as I have related, they might question the blessed merits of our Christian Church. Am I not a friendless man? I have found my boon companions insincere; I am no true friend, it seems, to the outcast; and to-day I see myself a traitor to my God.

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XX.

I HAVE solved the problem of the altar-cloth. There is a new suffragan bishop in these parts, and the Duchess of Leicestershire is arranging a monster bazaar to raise funds for dignifying the church which is to be his Cathedral. I blush to own it, but as I know the Duchess of Leicestershire's views are as high as the dome of St. Paul's, I played her as my trump card. It is almost sacrilege, but a little correspondence, ending with a cordial epistle to the Powder Puff, settled matters; the thing has been sent to her Grace, and every one here seems satisfied. There was a suggestion of a substitute being presented, but I stopped that. I pointed out that the real lovers of beauty in church insisted first on structural perfection, and that it would be a greater sign of piety and grace if the young lady would be so generous as to put a new roof on the vestry, which is not watertight. This did not appeal to her, of course, but she is in such a good humour since her lunch with

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the Duchess that she isn't difficult to convince. She will very likely persuade her father to do it, in which case out of evil good will come; anyhow, all is well that ends well.

There was a cricket match at Selby's yesterday. If you had seen me laugh, you would have ceased to call me melancholy. Old Selby, as I have told you, is an autocrat by instinct, and in spite of his preachings about liberty and equality, his practice is tyranny. I think he wants every one to be at liberty to answer his beck and call, and equality to exist above and not below him. His household staff opposed the village club. There was a little trouble at the outset: he insisted on his side fielding first because he would want some of them to be free later to bring out the tea-things. The parson tried to explain that this was not cricket. 'I wish it so,' says old Selby, and there was an end of it. One footman appeared with powdered head: he had been recruited at the last moment and came away in a hurry; it looked very nice, but the butler sent him home in disgrace. This butler is the

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fattest of his calling and, next to his master, the sternest of martinets ; his going in was like the descent of an Emperor into the arena. The grocer was bowling, and I suppose he had a desperate ambition to overthrow the monarch. His first delivery struck him like a round-shot on the shin ; he lay down and hugged his limb like a baby (it was probably a considerable shock for such an abnormal system) ; but the situation was ridiculous beyond description. He roared like a stag—a sort of hoarse noise between a bellow and a moan. The grocer, suddenly apprehensive, no doubt, of loss of favour and custom, trotted across and began to rub the wound. It was too serious an affair to permit of the risk of repetition, and the parson and the sufferer retired arm in arm ; the former with his professional graveside manner, the latter limping with sad loss of dignity, but generally regarded as a disabled hero. The family were in great distress ; even the Powder Puff paid a visit of condolence and asked how he felt. ‘Thank you, Miss, a little delicate.’—I think

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he meant that there was local tenderness; he looked as stalwart as an ox. Mr. Selby gave peremptory orders that the grocer was never to bowl again, and my dear parson was as much ashamed as if he had deliberately inspired the attack.

After all, the servants had to be fielding at tea-time, so Mr. Selby abruptly stopped play and left the other side to kick their heels until all the trays had been brought out. The visitors were not invited to share in the repast. When the game was finished, the host informed them that he had been glad to see them and hoped to see them again next year. His manner was so superb that it made one feel that a splendid favour had been conferred somewhere; but I don't think they were satisfied that he was either very hospitable or a very good sportsman. The proceedings put me into such a good temper that I allowed myself to be inveigled into a game of croquet with the Powder Puff. We got on so amiably that I foresee I shall be asked to contribute to her Garden of Friendship. If so, I shall send

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a gardenia plant and say that it is the only flower I care for; it will be rather a puzzle for her.

I dined with Mr. Darbyshire in the evening, and felt as if I had passed into another nation and another age. A pedigree man respects the world which has produced him; a self-made man wants the world to pay homage to what he has produced, and he usually succeeds up to a point, in the same way as a fashionable artist who can get a big price for an Academy picture which people won't look at later if it is put up with a good collection for sale. Novelty and notoriety have their charm, so has canonised antiquity; but excellence has no chance with the public if it is not fashionable—except with connoisseurs. I have looked on this picture and on that, and my mental state is all the better for the change of view.

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XXI.

I AM sorry to hear of Harry's troubles. You say that he has been shamefully treated, because you have a gentle and sympathetic spirit; but he knew his world and might have known what to expect. Society, as we know it, is after all a game, and he who joins in it must abide by the rules. It is a curious phenomenon that any girl who goes to houses is conceded the right to marry any one she likes or who likes her; the 'better' the match the greater the credit; nobody blames her—nothing succeeds like success; but with men like Harry the case is otherwise. Once accepted they may be asked anywhere this side of Sandringham; all that the world requires of them is good spirits with a tendency to frivolity and a competent knowledge of bridge. They may drink as much champagne as they please, and shoot as many pheasants as they can: not too much of the former and not too few of the latter, or they will be dropped; they are *ami de la maison* as much as any man,

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but if one of them aspires to marry a daughter — crash! The warmth of friendship, almost the tenderness of caresses, he has lost; icy stiffness, aloofness, and reproach confront him instead. He may exercise his fiery passions and make a fine show of his wounds; but I don't know that he deserves much pity. Every one in pain and sorrow should be pitied, for the first anguish of childish grief and for the last stunning blow of genuine misfortune, and throughout the gamut I don't know of any affliction more truly pitiable than that which has visited our friend. Heaven has been down to earth or earth has reached up to Heaven: he and one other person have for the moment been the centre of a blaze of splendour and tumult; the air seems to have been ringing with a fanfare of triumph, then suddenly the world is dead and silent and sunk in unfathomable gloom. Shakespeare is supposed to supply the standard by which human emotions are gauged, and I don't think that Shylock and Lear and Macbeth are supposed to have found their infirmities, or sorrows, or punishments more difficult to

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endure than were the troubles of Romeo and Juliet. There comes a madness which paralyzes self-control, and the worst of it is that one prefers seeing a man retain his scars and prove that the stab was vital, to finding him back in the fray healed and sprightly, as if he had been shamming or making a fuss about nothing. But for Harry one can only have the compassion which a child deserves when he has been told that the fire burns, and forthwith clutches a red-hot poker: he knew the rules of the game perfectly well, and if he chooses to break them he must pay the penalty; nor do I blame the parents overmuch—they also knew the rules. It is dishonest cant to rail against the worldly mothers: they follow an instinct older than their civilisation; every one of them desires her daughter to marry some one of consequence. They wish the man to be clean and good; but a clean record and a good heart are not enough, and it is a legitimate ambition, only offensive if it is cloaked with hypocritical denials. One excellent woman once confessed to me that she

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would never willingly allow her daughters to make humble marriages; they had been brought up to certain conditions and habits of life, and she thought it would be wrong to let them throw themselves impulsively on any other. And one *débutante* I recollect, who assured me that she would never marry a poor man: her sisters had made distinguished marriages, and she did not intend that her children, if she were to have any, should be worse off than theirs. She married rather a cad, but he is very good-natured and very rich, and she is extremely happy. Her sisters married home-keeping peers, whilst she, I gather, is soaring into elysian fields of 'smartness.' All quite right; they were both wise enough to know what for them and theirs constituted happiness, and honest enough to confess it. No, Harry could not afford to play for these stakes, and if he found that the gambler's fit was on him, he should have cut out at once. Probably, if he had been made an exception to the rule and been allowed to have his way, it would have ended in disaster.

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My candid friend was shrewd enough. What are the conditions with young people? Dinners and balls in London, parties in country houses; they are on the stage all the time; they never see one another without the make-up and the footlights. A man can never know what a woman really is until he sees her when invitations and new clothes are running short, nor can she know him until she has seen him on a foggy morning when bills are coming in; they may both stand the test, they may not, and therein lie the extremities of Mr. Micawber's alternatives. No: don't blame the worldly mothers. I honestly believe that in the end they often save their daughters from unhappy lives.

I only hope that Harry won't get lazy and fat, and then marry for money. I like a good romance and like to see it kept up. I don't mean that he is mercenary, nor that he should marry some one without a penny. There ought to be a happy medium between marrying gaily when there is no dowry at all, and inquiring too carefully into a young lady's prospects. I am not sure how it is to be

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found : if a man does the former he is blamed for improvidence, and if he does the latter he is condemned as an adventurer. Meanwhile, Harry must become a philosopher ; there are only two ways of dealing with life : to take it seriously and pray for escape, or to treat it as a joke and pretend that nothing matters. I have pursued one course ; I hope he will be wise enough to try the other.

XXII.

I DON'T think I overlooked the woman's point of view in the marriage problem. Only recently it occurred to me that a girl's outlook on life differs materially from that of a man in this respect : she has no abiding home. In the world of which I was speaking she certainly can't expect to live for ever in the place where she was born and brought up. If she does not marry, she must be prepared to go when her father dies and his heir succeeds. If she does, she rules her husband's establishment during his

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life, but if she survives him she must retire again in favour of the new occupier. A country dower house or a London street must be her ultimate retreat, unless she re-marries and begins *da capo*; whereas most men may, if they choose, take permanent root early in life. And I never said that all women were snobs. My point was that social ambition is legitimate and natural. I am not sure when the inspiration first enters into a woman's mind: I think she weaves romances round her dolls, and I don't believe that they are often about love in a cottage. A schoolboy knows nothing of these things; he reverences most the players of games, certain flannel caps are more lovely in his eyes than coronets, and an Eton drybob would rather wear a light blue sash round his waist than a dark blue one on his breast. His hero may be the son of a duke's agent: it is not until he comes to London that he perceives attractions and advantages in the duke's own position. He loses none of his affection or regard for his schoolfellow; he does not want to toady the duke, but he learns that certain

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proportions and contrasts exist. Nobody but a theoretical republican denies them. It cannot be doubted that life is more vivid and stimulating in a palace than it is in a suburban villa. It is more amusing to dine with a duke, and meet cabinet ministers and field-m Marshals, than to spend an evening with the most amiable of provincial society. Regarded as acquaintances and occasional companions, people who live very much in the world are more entertaining than those whose experience is local and limited. I would prefer a company of celebrated authors, lawyers, travellers, and politicians, to an assembly of estimable men, who had never thought or done or seen things of moment. Not being an ascetic by nature, I appreciate splendour which is neither excessive nor pretentious. Every one likes to live as well as he or she can ; every one likes to be in the movement, but that is not to be a snob. A man may have a passion for literature and art ; it is only when he airs his attainments impertinently and assumes a supercilious tone that we call him a prig. Likewise a man may

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prefer to live with eminent people ; it is only when he parades his distinguished acquaintances, and seems to despise others, that we call him a snob. Some people take to the peerage as others do to the bottle. To have either the one or the other always on your lips is offensive, but this craving exists only in extreme cases. Snobbishness then becomes social priggishness, and generates the rudeness and bad taste which are called vulgarity. I only knew one person who not only felt none of these distinctions, but could not even understand that they had any significance for other people, and she is dead. It was a singular case. If her daughter had been offered the alternatives in marriage of the eldest son of a rich duke and the younger son of a poor country parson, and she had chosen the latter, I am certain that my friend would have been well pleased, if she had thought it promised happiness, and that she would have been very much astonished if she had been told that people saw anything remarkable in the matter. You are the most

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amiable and admirable of women, but you would recognise the extremes of value, and I am not calling you a snob. No, it is one of those obvious phenomena which stare us in the face every day, as plainly as the mansions in Belgravia and the hovels in the slums, and it is cant and hypocrisy to say that we see no difference between them. Courtesy and modesty are the correctives of the abuse; the former ensures appreciation of those who are excellent in their smaller sphere; the latter teaches true moderation in your social estimates. I believe that every one falls into his proper place amongst his neighbours. A man or woman may by luck and determination usurp a position to which they are entitled neither by birth or character, but they are the excrescences which ought to be removed, and, in fact, often disappear. Personal charm, rare abilities, peculiar wit, are able to secure for their possessor a position as enviable as any occupied by right of birth or wealth. No man should be discontented with the attention or neglect which he receives; it is probably the

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exact amount which he deserves. Even then he may regret his exclusion from interesting scenes and circles without being a snob; it is when he tries to cover his nakedness with pretences and excuses that he reveals the infirmity. I have never stayed at Culmstock, but the parties of which I read in the papers always seem to me attractive, and I should like to go there, and I am not ashamed of the confession. If I were unhappy because I don't go there and felt tempted to let people think I could go if I liked, then I should be heartily ashamed of myself. At all events, I hope so. One should always try to bear in mind the teaching of Emerson (the American, not our friend), self-respect should be the predominant principle. The provisions of custom and the dictates of fashion regulate the actions and principles of most people. Here at least predestination should be inoperative: we have a free will to act and think for ourselves, instead of following a lead in which we have no faith and to which we owe no allegiance. Which reminds me of an *obiter dictum* of our

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modern and familiar philosopher of the same name. One night conversation ran in this groove, and somebody propounded the problem of wherein lay the charm of great houses and great people. The name, the place, sentiment, and association were all suggested. One platitude said that he recognised only the aristocracy of intellect, and that the superiority of great houses was restricted to their libraries. Our friend Emerson said that as far as he could judge true aristocracy resided in the kitchen: a man's social position depended on his cook, which is far from being nonsense. Even Culmstock would lose its popularity if it were conducted on strictly temperance and vegetarian principles; and even I might command the legion of the elect if I baited my table with consummate art.

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XXIII.

My friend the parson preached this morning a sermon after my own heart. I hate listening to a clergyman who moralises about the usages of society of which he knows nothing at all, and of which I know a good deal. One is either aware of the evil and does not need to be taught, or else one is ignorant and remote, and need not be enlightened. What I want is to hear the Scriptures expounded. They are his business and presumably he knows more about them than I do. My parson discoursed on the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, which contains one of the most beautiful passages in the English language; perhaps the most beautiful. It is like a recitative in music. So is the first sentence of *Rasselas*: it reminds one of the opening bars of an oratorio. By-the-bye it is rather hard on a clergyman that he should be denied the advantages of humour, which is the greatest resource of an orator in any other line of business. I only once heard a preacher who

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was designedly funny: he made his congregation scream with laughter and held their attention sure enough, but I don't think the effect was satisfactory. It is a compensation that the man in the pulpit can't be heckled; but here also there is a loss. Of all the forms of sport with which I am acquainted there is none more exciting than answering questions at an election meeting. You don't know what is coming, and you must let fly at it instantler, hit or miss: nothing does you more good or harm than the aptitude or ineptitude you have for a quick and witty reply. It occurs to me that here is an illustration of the difference between wit and humour. It has been elaborated by divers authorities, never satisfactorily. Some one says that wit is mirth turned philosopher, humour is philosophy at play. Professor Mahaffy has tried his hand, but his contribution is rather an essay than a definition. Lowell says that the tendency of humour is towards overplus of expression, while the very essence of wit is its logical expression. It is cruder and not less true, I

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think, to say that humour deals with ideas and wit with words. The finest specimen of humour possible is the trial scene in *Pickwick*: a first-rate example of wit is the retort of the gentleman to whom the Regent had said, 'I hear you are the greatest blackguard in the town:' 'I hope your Royal Highness has not come here to take away my character.' It is the fashion to condemn puns, though Doctor Johnson liked them—bad ones too. I agree with him: 'Very well, sir: the first play upon words to-day.' Emerson is a true Johnsonian in this: no pun comes amiss to him. Last time I met him the conversation turned upon the Bacon and Shakespeare controversy: he said that the plays might have been written by Bacon, but that nobody could say it was a case of porker verba. I hope you are a good-enough Latinist and Shakespearian to see through this. You may say it is a vile trick: I think it enlivens talk to give it a twist now and then: the unexpected is at all events an element of wit, and he continually pops in fantastic quips that don't suggest themselves to slower minds.

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He is a humourist, moreover. He told us how he had been taken by his wife to a distribution of prizes at a girls' school and had to make a speech for her. It was a portentously solemn and sober affair, and there was he trying to be as grave as the rest of them. He saw nothing but the comic side of it and gave us a description worthy of *Pickwick*. You could not call it witty: it was purely humorous.

I can't help being attracted by this Shakespeare controversy. People say that it does not matter who wrote the plays; and if you put it in that way, nothing matters. But what I like about it is that if Shakespeare was not the author, what a magnificent hoax it is, and how splendidly ridiculous have been all the generations of pilgrims, English and foreign, to Stratford-on-Avon. There is humour, if you please. I read a book lately which convinced me beyond the shadow of a doubt of two things: one was that it was absolutely impossible that the man Shakespeare could have produced the plays; the other that it was proved and established beyond the possibility

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of question that the writer must have been Lord Bacon and none other; unless indeed we call him Lord Verulam—this he was; and Viscount St. Albans: never Lord Bacon, as he is always named. No doubt the next book I read will confirm me as surely in a contrary faith.

XXIV.

I HAD to go to London to see my publisher on Tuesday, and I stayed the night. Finding that I was asked to Winton House I went there, hoping that I might see you. Why did you not go? It was very small and stiff, and as hardly any young people were asked, there was little disposition to dance. The royalties went to supper with a fortunate few, and the rest of the world had the door shut in their faces. They lingered there like peris at the gate of paradise, or like the starving poor at the convent gate in Longfellow's poem, whilst a gorgeous flunkey unceremoniously kept them at bay: not a dignified spectacle. And when

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the doors were opened the crowd began to push. It was a most unmannerly performance, fit for Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday. I wonder why food should overcome all rules and habits of patience and decorum : it does. Hunger can't be pleaded as an excuse : these ladies and gentlemen had dined profusely a few hours before, and had done nothing since to stimulate their appetites. I made one valuable observation : for some time past the sense of being bored by people has been growing more frequent and acute in me. It must surely follow that I bore other people to a corresponding extent. Hence my fall from favour.

Sometimes in the course of my meditations here a passing flash of humanity disturbs my solitude and I am roused :

‘ I will not shut me from my kind,
And lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind.’

But a return to civilisation only deepens my shadows again :

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‘ For ground in yonder social mill,
We rub each others’ angles down.’

I seem to lose my identity, and whatever small
allowance of character I am endowed withal :

‘ We glance, and nod, and bustle by,
And never once possess our soul
Before we die.’

Or as another poet describes the life :

‘ To dress, to call, to dine, to break
No canon of the social code,
The little laws that lacqueys make,
The futile decalogue of Mode.’

I feel at a ball now like a monkey on a barrel-organ : he takes no pleasure in his garments, the music has been made distasteful by damnable iteration, and he looks profoundly wearied and sad. He performs his antics in a perfunctory way without a sign of gaiety, or any illusion about giving pleasure to the mortals around him. He probably hankers after his native forest, or would hanker if he could reason and remember. The difference

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between us is that he has the painful alternative forced upon him, and I submit to it of my own free will; my native forest being represented by this temporary and experimental lodging.

The supper was superabundant and exotic; the produce of all climates and seasons. Two of my old acquaintances encouraged me to dance afterwards in a complimentary manner. This added to my evil humour: I felt as if I were a dancing dog, with no other accomplishment, useful or otherwise. The best company I found was on my way home: a wretched beggar came whining after me, and I made him speak in his natural voice and walk alongside like a human being. He was a compositor out of work: he had lately come back from his militia training, and had been robbed of his bounty money at the place where he gets his night's lodging. He had been selling papers in the street, and told me what I had long wished to know, namely, the system of distribution and payment. It is a poor speculation at best. I cross-examined him and

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could believe his story, because I know his battalion: we were encamped next to them last year, and I know the names of his colonel and adjutant. I asked why he did not go into the regular army; he said he had tried, but that they rejected him on account of his teeth, although, he said, he could eat anything when he got it. I thought of the supper I had left. Here was half London only intent on getting an appetite for their food; and the other half continually in search of food for their appetite. He described his lodging-house: the cheapest sort; I don't suppose he gets much comfort for his pennies. I gave him half-a-crown and all the cigarettes I had, and he was overcome with gratitude: I also gave him my card and told him that if he liked to come down here I would employ him somehow, and see whether I could get him a good start in life. I don't suppose that he will come. His conversation came as a *memento mori* after the glitter and voluptuousness of Winton House.

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XXV.

I HAVE had a letter from my vagrant friend asking for money: I have refused. If he wants help, he must come here. I will do what I can for him, but business is business. It is not easy to love one's neighbour as oneself, except in the case of a beautiful woman, because in that form of attachment there is a considerable amount of self-love. The main purpose, then, is to make the other person love oneself, and to impress oneself as favourably as possible on the other person. If you always took as close an interest in the affairs of your neighbour as you do in your own, you would be a nuisance, impertinent and inquisitive. I don't intend to enthrone this individual as my bosom's lord, but I should like to improve his miserable lot. I suppose that the preacher who was here lately would say that Christian sympathy was what he needed. I can give him plenty of that; but I am of opinion that proper food, clean living, and a little wholesome discipline would meet the necessities of the situation more effectually.

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For some reason, I woke at five o'clock this morning, so I went out of doors. I understand it is the mission of art to interpret nature, but this is an aspect of it which can't be interpreted. A filthy beggar, whom it is painful to behold in the flesh, can become a fascinating figure when Murillo or Velasquez takes him in hand. A house or a garden can be idealised, a skilful treatment of shadows and light can call attention to beauties in earth and sky which an untrained eye is apt to overlook; but there is something in the atmosphere and spirit of early morning which is difficult to define and impossible to represent. It is a remarkable fact that for most of us it is a neglected and unknown beauty, or known at best in connection with a return from a night of revelry. Only at daybreak on a summer morning is London light and clean. I remember the annoyance I felt on such a morning of smokeless skies and long clear vistas, when I caught sight of myself in the looking-glass of the cab in which I was driving. I had danced violently all night; I had emerged hot and dishevelled with the last of the guests. The flowers had

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faded, the lights made a horrid contrast with the softer rays of sunrise, the game was played out, the long excitement was beginning to give way to reaction. After the night of tumult and emotion, here, even in St. James's, were perfect serenity and silence. I saw myself like a hideous creature of darkness, and my coxcombry was put to instant shame. I recollect another morning after a terrible all-night sitting in the House of Commons. I was exhausted in body and brain, as nobody can be who has not had to take part in one of those senseless and degrading ordeals. I was crawling home half stunned with fatigue, when I was suddenly and completely revived by the strange vision of St. James's Park. Nurses and loafers and keepers prevent one from regarding it with tender emotions in the course of one's daily passage; but here it was, an untenanted garden; the lake sparkled as purely as a Highland loch; the only sounds were the stirring of the water-fowl on the island and the chirping of sparrows overhead. It was a revelation, an aspect unsuspected hitherto—

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the only beneficial result of an all-night sitting with which I was ever made acquainted.

I wonder what is the secret of this charm. It is not objective ; it is not ponderable and inevitable, like the Duke of York's column. It might inspire a poet, it excites admiration in me ; it is neutral to my man William, unmeaning, no doubt, to my vagrant friend, and non-existent for my dog Pat. The truth is, that the world is guided by influences of which we are unconscious, and to which we are subject in varying degrees ; that is why its course is so erratic. We don't try to discern the propelling forces, nor calculate the strength which will give predominance in one direction or another. Beauty, fear, love, hatred, prejudice, selfishness and ignorance ; man by man the passing generation is played upon by these forces from the cradle to the grave, no two of us susceptible in precisely the same measure to all or any of them—all of us talking and striving in obedience to the prevailing impulse. Whatever be the receptive faculty, it was lively enough in me this morning. I understand

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that artists see colours to which we laymen are blind. If there is a characteristic colour in these early mornings, I think it is that of the violet; that, at all events, is how it appears to me, though, I suppose, the rose is more appropriate; it gives the same impression as the tender delicacy which I see in the complexion of a young and beautiful girl. Lest you should find me too romantic, let me hasten to add that one of the most beautiful effects of colour I ever saw was produced in London one autumn evening by a combination of gas-lamps and fog. The sun was setting behind a mountain of purple clouds, a light mist hung in the quiet park, and all the space between Westminster and Piccadilly was draped in richest blue and gold.

It is a great gift, this appreciation of what is beautiful out of doors, even if it is possessed only in an uncritical and amateurish form, because it is easily indulged, and it increases rather than wanes. Whatever evil future life may have in store for me, I shall always be able to gladden my heart by the contemplation

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of an English landscape. My early rising to-day afforded the same exquisite satisfaction which I used to derive in gayer times from the appearance at breakfast of a beautiful woman in a pretty summer dress. There was about both of them a delicious freshness, which naturally evaporated as the day wore on. Even at five o'clock there was a haze vibrating over the ground portending a hot day, and this has not been discredited; so have I seen in the temperate hour of country-house life an impalpable indication of ardent emotions to be generated by some lovely young lady which she has not failed to justify before night. Well, here I am, in the noon-tide of splendour, and conscious that my admiration and delight are not at the mercy of caprice, and cannot be taken away. No homage is expected in return, and the glory of it all is poured forth in unstinted prodigality for me, as well as for any other mortal with a pen to write and a tendency to platitudinise.

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XXVI.

I HAD another letter from my vagrant a day or two ago. Whoever writes his letters is a crafty villain, with some education and style ; but I am not quite such a fool as he thinks. Having failed to extract a donation, he now tries the 'opportunity of a lifetime,' which he cannot seize because he lacks the necessary capital, and which can never be presented again. No doubt, if I sent the money, they would divide it, the scribe appropriating the larger share. I have replied that he may submit his case to my lawyer, who has authority to advance the money if he is satisfied ; of course he—which means they—won't dare to do this. I have added that my lawyer is further empowered, in default of the former contingency, to advance the amount required for a journey hither. He will probably go and get this ; whether he will then come or not depends on the degree of poverty in which he is existing, and the extent to which he is under the influence of the other gentleman.

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I think I shall ask my lawyer to buy a ticket, so that the other man can't appropriate the money. I should like to take the creature in hand, but it is a free country, and if he prefers his gutter freedom in town to an orderly existence here, he must have his way.

I have other news, however, which will interest you more. What do you think of Harry bringing his broken heart here to be mended? It seems that he met the Selby family at Dinard last year and, as I diagnose the case, amused himself by exciting the romantic instincts of the young lady. You may be sure that a gentleman of so much fashion and consequence lacked no encouragement, and he is apparently fulfilling an old promise of a visit. The naked truth is that in his soreness and vexation he has resolved to marry the Powder Puff for the sake of her father's money. It is not heroic, and I am sorry to report it of your friend; but his judgment and temper are warped, and his impulses for the moment are not under control. I will never meddle again in other people's affairs, and if this is his

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intention, it is no business of mine to thwart him ; but that does not mean that I intend to encourage him.

I don't know what he thought when he heard that I was here, but he must have concealed his surprise under a pretence of pleasure which he cannot possibly have felt, because I suddenly rose in Mr. Selby's estimation : he did not know that I had such a desirable acquaintance. Harry came to see me, sadly puzzled over his policy : first, he was disposed to bluff me with the suggestion that his presence was an accident ; then he ignored further explanation ; finally he was inclined to be communicative. This was during his third visit, when, I suppose, a crisis of some sort had to be faced. He began to ask my opinion about the family, and I let him have it, though it was not genuine. I said I thought Mr. Selby a fine specimen of nature's gentleman ; so modest and considerate. I enlarged on the refinement and simplicity of the daughter, and pointed out the superiority of her quiet and cultivated manners to the

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false veneer of your London maidens. This made him frown. I next commended that cub of a brother as a young British officer of the right sort ; so genial and unaffected. He moved uneasily here. To complete the charm of the family circle I observed that the comic cousin, who has turned up again, was the sort of fellow whom it is always pleasant to have about the house ; so amusing and sociable. At this point I think Harry said something to himself : possibly he was repudiating this vulgar and impudent cousin-elect as part of the contemplated bargain. It is my honest opinion that he would have retired with a resolve to send to somebody for the regulation telegram of recall had not Mr. Darbyshire chosen this moment for one of his rare visits. See how a trivial occurrence may influence a group of destinies : here was Harry, a piece of rather damaged goods, about to be returned to store, capable of repair, to reappear in daily use as good as new. In comes Mr. Darbyshire, innocent of design, and takes the stock off my hands. He discovered with evident pleasure

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that Harry was the son of an old and dear friend : nothing would do but we must go to lunch with him. We went : and the effect on Harry was remarkable. The consequence of his present habitation can only be to exasperate his nervous irritation : he found Mr. Darbyshire's house a placid backwater aloof from the tumultuous tide in which he had lately been buffeted about. When I left he appeared to have been domiciled where he was for many years and to purpose remaining there for ever.

Now the fun began. The Selby family had already exhibited impatience of his visits to me : there had been some marked allusions to *my* friend, as if I had been asserting some unwarrantable pretensions. When it became known that through my agency their guest had entered the camp of the enemy, the cup of my offence was filled to overflowing. I met Mr. Selby coming out of the post-office : ' We never see your friend, now,' he said ; ' you keep him so well supplied with amusements and acquaintances that he has little time left for us.'

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‘That is his loss,’ said I gallantly ; which was a failure. He is self-conscious and void of humour : of course he thought I was jeering at him.

‘ Mr. Darbyshire is glad enough to get him, I expect,’ he snapped out.

‘ Mr. Darbyshire knew him as a child long before you and I did,’ I submitted meekly.

‘ Then I wonder he didn’t invite him to his house instead of allowing him to come to mine.’

‘ He will very likely want him to go there when he leaves you,’ I said.

‘ Oh, well, of course, if he finds my house dull, he can look for livelier companions elsewhere.’

‘ He shows no disposition to exchange your hospitality for mine, at all events,’ I answered, trying to soothe him ; ‘ so that I am the least favoured of all.’

‘ I don’t understand young men nowadays,’ he grumbled.

‘ They are peculiar,’ I assented.

He is a mass of arrogance and jealousy, and has no idea of manners.

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XXVII.

My vagrant has turned up. He says he was 'stony broke.' I never supposed that he was affluent, and I thought that his phrase was only used by wealthy gentlemen who have joyously careered along the flowery path to ruin. However, here he is, and I find him rather an incubus. It is understood that he is to do odd jobs and make himself generally useful. At present he is a general nuisance. The gardener says he is no use to him: 'He don't hardly know which end of a spade to take hold of, and he don't seem to have no understanding.' William says he is lazy, and my housekeeper says he is dirty. What am I to do? I really can't tend him like a child; and it looks very much as if I am to be a philanthropist by deputy. Charity is to begin at home by all my household being put to inconvenience and annoyance. I can't teach him how to dig: I don't know anything about it. I can't wash him. I can't

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very well go and help William, who is having more trouble than assistance at present. I have been talking to the unhappy creature, but I know I have not got the sympathetic gift. He seems to feel aggrieved that I would not send him money when he asked for it; but he does not bear malice, and shows a readiness to forgive and forget. I don't think he is grateful. Probably he approves of me as a good kind of bloke, and proposes to exploit me to the full. I tried an introduction to my dear parson, but the fellow was so cringing that I could not bear the sight. I suppose it has been part of his education to impose upon a clergyman, if he is not to salute him with a brickbat. The hopeless aspect of the case is that he has no definite opinions and agrees to everything. I indicate divers walks in life; even so distant a promenade as emigration; and he accepts them all, not indeed with the sanguine alacrity of Richard Carstone, but with a grinning apathy which is infinitely worse. There is an absence of character and spirit which reveals the demo-

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realisation resulting from such a bringing up, or dragging down, as his existence represents.

As for Harry, the plot thickens. He has a haven of rest in the society of Miss Darbyshire, and here he evidently means to take permanent anchorage. I have always understood that a man who is smarting from unkind usage at the hands of one lady, is apt to be caught on the rebound, as the saying is, and seek solace at those of another. This lady, with her gentle, dignified manner, may well afford comfort. The vulgar rowdyism of the Selby household could only draw him on to a forlorn hope: he unexpectedly finds a haunt of ancient peace, and his savage spirit is at rest.

He announced one morning that he was coming to stay with me: he said he had told Mr. Selby that I insisted. Seeing that I had told the gentleman a few days before that I had no pretensions of rivalry with his hospitality, I felt that the situation was awkward. But I could not say I would not have him. Of course I was delighted; but I didn't want to pile up the agony, and I did not want old

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Selby to think I had told him a lie. Next time I met him I played the toady: 'I have stolen your guest after all,' I said. 'I had no idea that he would honour my cottage so long as your palace was open to him. He is very self-denying.'

'I thought he had come here to visit us,' he answered, 'but I suppose he can choose his friends as he pleases.' Mrs. Selby was more emphatic: 'It's my opinion the young man is a fraud,' she said, with a sagacious wag of her head. I have no doubt that she had visions of weddings and desirable avenues leading into a wider and more exalted arena: and to do her justice I am sure she would be distressed if she thought her daughter was in trouble. But it is their fault: they seem to have marked Harry for their own, and boasted of their quarry before he was safely in the bag.

Mr. Darbyshire I fancy is perplexed: he is torn between his desire to show civility to the son of his friend and his natural reserve. He can't help perceiving the force of attraction which draws Harry to his house, and he is

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sure to be actuated by impulses extremely remote from those of Mr. Selby. Meanwhile Harry is here, and I don't deny that I rejoice in his company. William tried the experiment of letting my protégé assist in the gentle art of valeting. One evening he told him to go and prepare a bath and put out Harry's dress clothes: going up himself a little later, he found a foot-bath and a jug in the middle of the room and a brown suit on the bed. To his remonstrance that this was not the costume which he had indicated, the pupil objected, 'There's only the best suit what he'd wear on a Sunday.' He is not receptive of ideas, for he had been carefully coached.

I always liked entertaining; nothing gave me greater pleasure in old days than to collect a few congenial spirits for dinner. One could choose one's company, and to some extent control the talk. It amused me to throw a fly at the right moment and rise a fish which I knew would give good play all round, and I considered it rather a triumph if I felt that my guests went away as well pleased

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with all the sentiments they had got out as with the provisions which they had taken in. But somehow it wasn't a success. They seemed to enjoy themselves, and I never had to complain of untalkativeness. Some of them came again, but I found I was never asked to other people's dinners. They probably thought me the one drawback to my own. I clearly hadn't the true gift of a diner out, and so I heard of my friends dining with one another, and had to know that they did not want me. This made me feel that they only came to me on sufferance, and self-respect compelled me to cease from entertaining. I should never have thought of asking Harry to come here, nor would he have thought of coming if circumstances had not made it advantageous. But in his present mood he is delightful, and takes pains to make me believe that he comes for the pleasure of seeing me. I am not hoodwinked, but I pocket my pride and allow him to flatter me. After all, it is true hospitality; he wants a lodging, and I gave it him. If I had begged him to come and amuse me, the

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position would have been different. It is needless to say that he taxes my resources but little. We meet at meals, and very pleasant I find them. The rest of the day he spends at Mr. Darbyshire's house on one pretext or another. The situation is an open secret; he troubles himself with few apologies, and I trouble him with no comments. When he announces his engagement, we shall have a lively time. I think I shall station the vagrant at my gate with a heap of stones, and tell him to hurl them and defiance at any one approaching from the direction of Mr. Selby's house.

It is rather hard, after all, that my peace should be disturbed in this way; what is Harry to me that I should step into hot water to serve his purposes? Do you recollect that I compared Mr. Darbyshire's house with those which one sees on the stage, with the difference that in his case there was no plot; existence within its walls was devoid of incident; and here we are playing a comedy with all the zest in life. Old Selby supplies the farce, his son is quite capable of playing the

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villain; I only hope that in the daughter's case it is not to be a tragedy.

Luckily my book is off my hands, so that these distractions cause no serious inconvenience. In fact, a little excitement is not unwelcome. I take vast walks, and bicycle whenever I can elude Pat's vigilance, but as long as he is disengaged I have to accommodate myself to his methods of exercise. I am a slave to that dog. I have been looking at Butler's *Analogy*, which I read years ago; it seems at one moment as if he were going to prove that the existence of an animal is as indestructible as that of a human being; but he doesn't. I wish he would. There is so much of his argument that one has to accept on the faith of his word, that I would gladly include this principle. He—the dog, not the bishop—has just been waging war on a tramp who had invaded my garden. The essayists, such as Lamb and Stevenson, delight in idealising these gentry with all the attributes of dignity and romance. I try to see these qualities, but I can't. Their rags to me are rags, and are not

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more pleasant to behold than court liveries. I never detected dignity in their speech or bearing; the former is sometimes drunken, generally obsequious, in the last resource blasphemous; the latter is usually slouching and dispirited. I regard them with sorrow and compassion; to my mind it is a fearful prospect to go unwashed, unwarmed, uncovered; I see no possibility of romance in that as a permanent rule of living. It is quite true that they are spared all anxiety about the upkeep of appearances and the discharge of social obligations, but it is only the contingency of poverty that makes these claims formidable to us. As to the nonsense about the beggar's freedom, I would rather be free to clothe and house and feed myself according to my taste. This fellow was no better than the rest. He crawled and whined and was terrified at the sight of Pat. I tried to talk to him, but he was not inclined to conversation; in fact, he was a dull dog. I gave him something, and let him go on his way. I was rather annoyed to find him, long after this,

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engaged in animated discourse across the hedge with my protégé, who was supposed to be at work in the garden. Birds of a feather, I am afraid.

XXVIII.

My protégé has decamped. He distinguished himself on Sunday night by being discovered on the floor of my dining-room profoundly intoxicated in the midst of empty decanters. He had been told to clear the table, and this was how he did it. I gave him an orderly-room harangue next morning; he was full of contrition and stout resolutions, and said it was all my fault for putting temptation in the way. On Wednesday morning he was gone, so were most of the portable articles of value that were not locked up. It is a comfort to think that he won't starve at present; he ought to live well on the proceeds of divers match-boxes, silver trays, knives, and such trifles, for some time to come. The

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only grudge I bear him is for carrying off a paper-knife which my dear mother used, and which had been by my side ever since I lost her. He could not have known this, but to touch any relic of her is sacrilege, and if my anger is unreasonable, I may be pardoned for my grief. I would willingly let him keep the rest of his plunder, and pay him, too, if he would restore to me this alone. I can't help suspecting that his conference with that tramp had something to do with his conduct. It was not my lecture on Monday; he was not the man to flee away from shame too grievous to be borne. He was restless and bored, that was all, and he heard the tramp a-calling. Probably they are together now, dividing the spoil. I must not be too hard; my intention was good, but my execution poor. I got no hold on his feeble will, and failed to inspire him with any courage or ambition, and I left him too much in the keeping of the servants, who had no interest in his welfare, and probably made him feel, like Jo, that nobody wanted him, and that it was time for

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him to move on. The worst of it is that I can do nothing for him now. Even if I recaptured my bird, his position in my household would be invidious, and I could not give him a satisfactory character if a good opening for employment presented itself. It is not even permitted me to be the friend of the friendless.

If you have not skipped all this and looked ahead, you now come to what will interest you. Harry has made the plunge and come out triumphant. I am entertaining an accepted suitor. No doubt he will write to you himself; at present he is too much occupied with his new felicity—possibly he is also a little shy. Unless I am mistaken he was exhibiting to you not long ago the lacerations of his wounded heart, and he may find it difficult to choose the most favourable light in which to display the perfection of its healing. Perhaps the best course in such a case is to follow that incorrigible old punster, Emerson. When some young man was appealing for his sympathy in similar affliction, he said, ‘Summa

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ars is celare hartem : which means, the best thing you can do is to fall in love again as soon as possible.' But I need not teach you tact, and Harry won't be difficult to satisfy. At present he seems convinced of the fact that neither he nor any other mortal ever was in love on this planet hitherto. Who was it that said that every man vows that his first love is his last and his last love his first? Well, let this be accepted as Harry's first. I always wonder whether brides and bridegrooms harbour private misgivings. They have had ocular evidence of the breakdown of many an alliance within their knowledge, but they appear to entertain no doubt of their own security. Marriage may be a failure for others; never for them. Personally, I like weddings: one sees a number of good-looking and well-dressed people; the music is pleasant, and the final march inspiring. Moreover, there are two young people getting their own way for once, and by courtesy and convention there prevail a spirit of benevolence and assurance of a happy issue. I see nothing tiresome in all this,

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and regard those people as churls who profess to prefer funerals. There is gloom if you please, some caring too much, others not enough; the many offending by their indifference and scrutiny the sacred anguish of the few.

But for a truly pleasant object commend me to a newly-engaged young man. Here is your true egoist; here is entire self-satisfaction. He expects to attract all the richness of the earth, like the meridian sun, and if in his felicity he radiates a certain genial warmth upon mankind it is done unconsciously. You must no more ask for common sense from him than for a leg of mutton from a gin-shop, as Shelley said of himself. Our friend is chattering with delight, and takes it for granted that I am to chatter with him, though why I should I don't know. At all events, he is a more inspiring companion than he would be if he had failed. He talks and looks as if he had won a glorious victory, and deserved the thanks of the nation, whereas all that he has done is to get his own way. He is going to stay with Mr. Darbyshire now, so I had the parson

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here last night for a farewell dinner. He was as grinning and jubilant as if Harry had rendered him some notable service; he waxed enthusiastic on the subject of marriage, and compared his own wife's charms with those of Harry's lady. I don't think Harry quite liked this. And there was an awkward moment when he blurted out that he and his wife had made up their minds that Miss Selby was to have been the heroine of the adventure. Oh, simplicity, what harm you do and what pain you innocently cause! The dear little man thought he was exhibiting a pleasant shrewdness and a nice vein of humour.

We have had our first encounter with the Selby family to-day, at the bazaar of which I told you. The father was sulky and pompous, the mother freezing. The son was disposed to ignore us. I came upon him at the Duchess's stall, paying a fine price for her smiles and conversation. She caught sight of Harry, and hailed him as an old friend; declared that she was devoted to Miss Darbyshire, and so on, and so on, which was all gall and bitterness to Master

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Selby. He came sneering to me, 'I suppose he will be leaving you now and moving on to her Grace.' I said, 'Probably,' and left him.

But I must say that the Powder Puff came out with honours. She has the soul of a gentleman, after all, and is worth all the rest of the family tenfold. Between you and me, it can't be denied that our friend has sailed near the wind. He is, in fact, like some one in a farce which I used to know, who says, 'I have loved much in my time and often.' There is no doubt he filled up an interval in his cycle of attachments by attitudinizing at her last year, and with such a mother and brother she was no doubt encouraged to take him seriously. Here he comes again, begins his old blandishments, and abruptly transfers his attentions to another lady, with more definite result. When a man gets engaged to be married it must be to some extent a slight imposed upon all the rest of his female acquaintances who were open to an offer. They would be foolish if they complained on principle, but when matters have been carried far in an individual case, the per-

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son affected has undoubtedly ground for complaint. If female jealousy is ever to be justified, here is an occasion. However, to-day the young lady behaved with complete propriety; she not only said all the right things, and not a word too much, but she displayed a dignity which surprised me. There was none of the gush to which I had grown accustomed—in fact, I detected, to my great regret, the quietness of sorrow and affliction. My heart went out to her at once. I will never speak lightly of her again, and if I can find any means of befriending her I will seize them. There is more hardship than meets the eye in such a case. Apart from the soreness of heart which, heaven help us all, is bad enough, there remains the fact that a woman has fewer means of escape. A man can have, and ought to have, other outlets upon life; a woman has not. Ambition I believe to be a vice, and I have many reputable authorities, from Sir Thomas Browne to Charles Kingsley, on my side. The former urges us to ‘let ambition have but an epicycle or narrow circuit in thee;’ the

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latter talks of 'the honours of the grey head without envy, without vanity, without ambition': and I could quote you much more to the same effect. The truth is, that ambition unfulfilled is jealousy; fulfilled it becomes selfishness. Nevertheless, it is a common weakness amongst mortals, and with women it must be principally with the prospects of marriage, seeing that small scope for it exists beyond. Harry is not a great prize in this lottery, but they had persuaded themselves that he was, and the daughter thought she was going to distinguish herself. Now, we never know the extent of our desires until some possibility of attainment has appeared, and disappeared. This is precisely her case, and if she had shown a truly savage resentment and rage I could have forgiven her. Seeing with what courage and self-control she had faced her disappointment, I offer her my respectful admiration, and am deeply ashamed of the patronising levity with which I have spoken of her hitherto.

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XXIX.

AFTER the exciting events of the past weeks, existence has suddenly become dull. The Selby family have cut me, so that I cannot attempt my amiable purpose with respect to the daughter. I miss Harry, who has gone to London. In fact, I am depressed and dismal. It is all wrong: if I were pressed I should feel bound to confess that I wished to be left alone, and had no intention of depending on other people for my spiritual comfort, yet I can't deny that the comedy in which I have been playing a small part interested me, and that I am sorry it is over. In this mood of course I am full of self-reproach and misgivings. Am I not becoming an idle sensualist? Idleness I don't consider a positive evil. I know many busy and energetic men who do much harm to the public, or themselves, or their family, and at all events I can go to bed every night with the comfortable conviction that neither the State nor any individual will be the worse for word or deed of mine. Love of

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ease and comfort is not bad, *per se*, but one may become too self-indulgent. Sensuality in any form is physical selfishness, hence it is very difficult to repress it in ourselves, however much we may deprecate it in other people. Living as I do, there is much danger of slipping into bad habits unconsciously. It is easier and more mischievous to deceive ourselves than to deceive other people, and I may be becoming an abandoned sybarite without perceiving it. Don't imagine that I am contemplating anchorite penances to mortify the flesh. Asceticism is often nothing but a distorted form of sensuality, a pandering to a morbid aspiration. I am free from that infirmity, anyhow, and never can see the merit in making oneself uncomfortable without some object or reason. So long as a man is able and ready to endure discomfort when it is required of him, he may surely enjoy reasonable amenities in the ordinary course of life. None the less I feel sad! I think our sorrows great and small come most often from unexpected causes. It is the ex-

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pected which worries us, the unexpected which makes us sad. That is because memory is composed of sorrows which we cannot lose, and pleasures which we cannot keep: anticipation fears to meet the one and to miss the other. I did not worry about Harry's meteoric appearance. I did not expect him to flash across my vision: his passage has left me sad. I am a fool for my pains; the warmth of our comradeship was transient, and will soon grow cold. I decided long ago that people are never thoroughly under the control of their friendships. Love is a passion which we can't control; friendship is a habit which can't control us. I sometimes wonder whether this can be an argument against the permanence of one's identity. It seems as if no influence can endure unless it is constantly renewed. The attachments, the pleasures, the interests of ten or twenty years ago fade and are changed; we scarcely recognise ourselves in connection with them. Disuse destroys them. If we are to be held under their spell they must stay with us as the years go by, and

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grow by daily association to be bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. I struck the word 'friend' out of my dictionary some time ago. I had rested on a reed that kept on breaking and piercing my hand, and to save myself from further wounds I determined to rely no more upon so fragile and treacherous a growth.

They have been bothering me to attend and speak at a political meeting here, beslaving me with compliments on my famous eloquence. Having no valid excuse, I had to consent. Now, old Selby, who has no foolish pride about him, comes and begs me not to do it; he wants to be elected here, and hopes I won't go out of my way to damage his prospects. On public grounds, I suppose I ought to do what I can to keep out a politician whose allegiance is pledged to a Party which I profess to regard as a public nuisance and danger. If I wanted to do him a bad turn, I should try and get him in; it would serve him right. On reflection, though, I think he is the sort of man who would enjoy the House

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of Commons. On him, and such as him, the position does confer some benefit. He has no *locus standi* or connection here or anywhere else, and it would enable him to strut about the county talking of Prime Ministers and Whips and the Speaker's eye, and all the rest of the jargon, with an air of importance. He, moreover, would have a definite object, not to get the £1200 a year which Dizzy says is the obvious ambition of every professional politician, but the mercenary knighthood which is dearer to the heart of many. The attainment of this would only lead to restless and unfulfilled dreams of baronetcies and peerages, but he might reasonably hope to end by being presented with his portrait in grateful recognition of his notable services to his constituency and the State. Bulwer Lytton said the truest of all things about these patriots: whether it be the £1200 a year or the title which attracts them, their talk, says he, is all of what they are going to be, not of what they are going to do.

Selby gave an entertainment the other day

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with a view to establishing his fitness and properness to represent his neighbours in Parliament. I suppose he could not help asking me, and I went; I am glad I did. He had rigged up a platform in his coach-house, which was filled with hard benches. It was not much fun listening to his mumbled platitudes subject to such poor accommodation; but when he had done, a conjuror appeared, who was the best I ever saw. He was a vulgar brute in dress-clothes, which shone like satin, with a sham diamond solitaire, and a red handkerchief adorning his bosom. I suppose it is all very easy when you know how it is done, but to me it is undeniable magic. He made me tear up a card, retaining one corner. The torn pieces he threw into a bowl; then he made me get up, and there was the card lying on the bench with the corner missing. He told people the initials on their match-boxes and the names of the makers inside their watches. It ceased to surprise me when he pulled about a quarter of a mile of paper from between Mr. Selby's jaws and produced an enormous Union Jack out of

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the son's waistcoat-pocket. In fact, he did a number of things which any practical man or stern scientist would declare, without hesitation, could not be done. I suppose they can't, but I saw them done. He amazed the rustics still more by his ventriloquism and imitation of musical instruments. It is a remarkable fact that an audience seems to prefer the imitation to the original. Nothing gives greater pleasure than making a noise like a pig when his tail is twisted, or a couple of cats swearing at one another. If the performer brought on a pig and twisted his tail, or produced two cats and made them fight, the effect on the audience would not be at all an equivalent.

People make such astounding inventions and discoveries nowadays that I don't see why one should limit one's credulity. We live in an age of miracles, and the Witch of Endor would barely earn a living in modern competition. When the telephone and the phonograph and the bioscope are incapable of further improvement, we shall be obliged to open up communications with the unseen world, be-

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cause there will be nothing left to operate upon in this one. Years ago I belonged to the Society for Psychical Research ; they possessed thousands of records, all of which were guaranteed as true. Even if we grant that most of them were not, it would be difficult to disprove every scrap and syllable of their evidence. Admit one story to be true, and the entire principle is established. I have seen instances of mind influencing mind which open the door to a large admission of possibilities. I have seen one person write things under some unexplained inspiration so as to satisfy me that here, at least, was a power or susceptibility not possessed by you and me, or, if possessed, dormant and undeveloped. I never try and persuade people of the truth of these things. I don't care two straws whether they believe or not. They say it is all rubbish, and that any one who does believe is a fool—which is conclusive. But I can never see why it is a sign of intellectual superiority to deny. The fact that you have never seen a preternatural apparition nor received an abnormal

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communication may justify you in saying that, with your present means of judging, you are indisposed to allow that such phenomena exist ; but it is arrogance to aver that you know they do not exist, and that every one who says they do is a liar and a dupe. Your agnostic professes to say, ' I cannot prove that this is true, therefore I withhold my belief.' What, in effect, he asserts is, ' Nobody can satisfy me that this is true, therefore I positively declare that it is not.' Two elements conspire to enlarge our doubts : one is the existence of foolish people, who will adopt any rubbish that is put in their way ; the other is the trade of the mountebanks, who make a livelihood by practising on their infirmities. But the exposure of a few knaves and fools does not convict the whole community of folly and fraud. Probably it is a natural instinct to turn away from all projects and speculations which lie beyond our powers of achieving and perceiving. We are conscious of certain contingencies which would be of infinite advantage to us, but we feel ourselves incapable of bringing them to pass ; so

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we leave them alone. Likewise, the one issue of supreme moment to each one of us is the consequence of death ; yet we devote less thought to it, and derive less anxiety from its contemplation, than we give or suffer in our daily dealings with finance, ambition, or pleasure. I don't know, I don't care, I don't believe ; positive, comparative, superlative degrees of indifference, an indifference almost incredible—quite incredible in the case of an investment, a political crisis, a social aspiration. Cocksureness is insolent, but indifference is boorish.

Personally I hesitate to vouch for anything, whatever my private conviction may be ; equally loth am I to deny. When a Christian Scientist tells me that I can jump off a housetop with perfect safety so long as I have the right pattern of faith, I am apt to be sceptical ; and when people tell me that they have been in ships which are subject to no motion in an Atlantic gale, I know from experience that they bear false witness. Short of these and a few more limitations, I regard all things as possible. I think I am a Possibilist. I

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like inquiring minds, and I believe they have more in their philosophies than we dream of in our heaven and earth.

All of which reflections arise from seeing a provincial conjuror pull coloured paper out of Mr. Selby's mouth. I don't know what train of thought it set up in the rustic mind. I saw a carter near me holding on to the bench with both hands and gasping with amazement. I have no doubt he is quite satisfied that his master is furnished within like the village stationer. Seeing is believing, and he had the evidence of those eyes which were starting out of his head. It is a good thing for the performer that witchcraft is an obsolete offence, or he would undoubtedly have been put into the ducking-stool; that is to say if male witches were liable—I forget.

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XXX.

EVIDENTLY Harry was destined to be my evil genius, or else I have entertained an angel unawares to save me from those besetting sins of selfishness which I confessed to you. He has come back and completed the disorder of my humble existence. Having forced me into strained relations with my nearest neighbours, he now proceeds to upset all my daily habits. He says I want rousing; walking and bicycling he declares are impossible; I must have amusements. This means that he wants to play golf and sometimes cricket, and insists on my doing the same. I never pressed him to walk or ride a bicycle. The only accomplishment of which I ever had to boast was proficiency at cricket; for many years I lived for little else. When I found that it required too great a sacrifice of time, and that if I played rarely I played ill, that, in fact, the delight and power were gone, I gave up the game for ever. Harry rather likes a day's cricket: he never played well enough to be conscious of deterioration, and,

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on the whole, he finds it passes his time agreeably. Consequently, he has pledged us both for some games with his new acquaintances. I dare say he thinks it is good for me; possibly he does not think about it at all. Besides this, he drags me out when I don't want to go out, to play golf with him. Miss Darbyshire doesn't play, she walks with him. They talk to one another a great deal: to me, very little. We are both bad players and the course is primitive. We progress slowly: we lose our balls often and our tempers oftener. There are long and many delays in waiting for one another, and I would give anything to be allowed to take my stick and march off stoutly. I don't think he is really fond of the game; but other people like it, or pretend they do, and, as a matter of course, he has to like it, or persuade himself that he does. Don't think me unkind or priggish if I add that possibly he would not know what to do with himself if he had no fixed occupations. I remember that some years ago we spent Christmas together in a country house: it was in happier days,

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when I was fond of people and flattered myself that they were fond of me. I enjoyed every hour of the day and was never at a loss for amusement. One bitter-cold morning, we were carried off directly after breakfast to shoot. There were many projects afoot in our merry company ; some of the things which we had decided to do really needed preparation and attention. However, out we went. There was little or nothing to shoot at : they had been through the covers recently. The wind came screaming from the north-east, with squalls of sleet at intervals ; my ears and nose ached with cold, my hands and feet were numbed. The woods had a forlorn appearance : so had the poor little boys who shivered and shook in their scanty wraps. There was nothing for them to stop, and they might as well have been at play. I had not fired off my gun for an hour and was losing patience. The only sound audible was the tap-tap of the urchins, who seemed to be no more taken in by the pretence of pheasants running forward than I was. At the end of one blank beat I

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unburdened my mind a little and confided to Harry that I thought this was a poor way of spending the morning. 'If we did not do this, what would there be to do?' was his comment. I perceived then what a daily incubus life must be to a man who is avowedly incapable of providing himself with any interest whatever out of his own resources.

I found in those days that I was continually doing things that I did not greatly like because other people liked them, and because I was expected to like them. It is a sharp discipline; pleasure is all codified and the provisions are strictly enforced. Perhaps it was because I was insubordinate and would not enjoy myself 'by numbers,' as we say at drill, that I made myself so unpopular. I can't help it: daily irritation and boredom were too high a price to pay for the world's approval. I never wanted others to conform to my tastes and they did not need my assistance: why could they not leave me alone? Hunting people were the most intolerant, and I am afraid I must add that herein women were the worst offenders.

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Hunting men are apt to look on men who do not hunt with compassion: hunting women regard them with contempt, sometimes with a malignity approaching hatred. Now, I always had an admiration for a genuine lover of hunting, and a corresponding horror of such as hunted in order to be in the fashion. I don't know that your hunting woman is my favourite type, but I respect her spirit and appreciate her craft, if she be genuine. I used to resent, therefore, the scornful disdain with which these Dianas inquired how on earth I passed my time, if, indeed, they condescended to notice my existence. If I had put on a supercilious air and declared my inability to understand how they could waste theirs in this way, I fancy they would have been astonished; but I never felt like that.

No less unreasonable is the popular judgment upon books. People are astonished if you have not read the books which they like; still more astonished if you read books which they don't like. A charming lady, replete with the newest novels, was once

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shocked to find me so illiterate. In self-defence I urged that I had been a good deal occupied with Memoirs lately. 'Oh, what a prig!' was her astonishing rejoinder; and I have never been able to follow her train of thought. 'Can you tell me of any good new books?' is a question I hate to hear: it means any good new novels. I always want to say, 'No, but I can tell you of some very good old ones.' It is a strange confession of weakness to have no definite taste or capability of choice. People never ask you to choose their friends for them: why, then, their writers? If a man asks a woman to help him to find a wife, it is because he wants to marry some one and has no predilection in the matter. He must recognise that it is a risky venture. In the same way, if he asks some one to recommend him a book, it must mean that he has no particular taste to indulge, but would rather like a respectable occupation. His prospects of satisfaction are no less dubious. Personally, if I had married, I should certainly have preferred to choose my own wife; as I depend very much on the

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company of books, I am no less jealous of my right of selection. I know one man of many attainments who has an infallible standard: if you do not know his books, it is, 'Good gracious! do you mean to say you have never read it?' If you modestly mention a favourite of your own, it is, 'Rubbish! waste of time!' After all, children at play all want to invent the game and enforce compliance, so that this tyranny is, I suppose, innate in us all.

In the model republic or Utopia, all these things would presumably be graded, and we should have to conform to the official rules for recreation. Private judgment and personal inclination would be in conflict with public harmony, which is one reason why I don't think that Socialism contains the elements of human nature. The only definite impression I retain of Plato's community is that all women were to be common property. I can't help thinking that this would give rise to friction, and that even if the Divorce Court had no further duties to fulfil, the strong arm of the law would still be needed to

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enforce order and reconcile disputes. I have no intention of troubling you with any observations on the economic aspect: I suggest only the objections which many people might raise against a law forbidding them to exercise their individual affections, or cultivate their native talents, or let loose their peculiar energies. There is one occasion upon which all men of spirit will sacrifice the former two and devote the third to the service of the community. No matter how deeply ingrained be the individualistic instinct, how slight the sense of obligation to others, every selfish consideration is made subordinate to national interest and public need upon the outbreak of war. Love, gain, ease, home, are sacrificed. Death, wounds, cold, want—all these dreadful prospects are embraced with enthusiasm; all respectable citizens for once are the children and servants of the State, and she may exact from them a common and ungrudged obedience, though their untrained efforts may be of questionable value. There are, of course,

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excepted cases: some are unfit for physical, some for constitutional reasons, and would give more trouble than assistance. Of some, the sacrifice should only be demanded in the last extremity—cases I mean in which it imperils profession, home, and family. And there are the people with duties of equal public importance at home; and the people with no spirit, public or private. And for the matter of that, one must preserve moderation and remember that there is a difference between a man who is a trained and professional soldier and a man who is not. If, in an emergency, every civilian is as much a warrior as his military brother, then the army enjoys undue privileges of a decorative character in time of peace. What I mean is that a man like Harry, sane in mind and body, may be self-contained in the ordinary affairs of life, but he will not hesitate to break his bonds asunder at the first call of *la patrie en danger*. Life, indeed, is itself a state of war; from many its privations and its misery are never withheld; for some there is the zest of battle and joy of victory: the anguish of

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suspense and the agony of defeat for others. Many are wounded and fall by the way, the inefficient are weeded out upon the march, and of such I consider that I am one. But there remain many more who are left in the garrison, or at some safe and pleasant station, where perhaps they suffer nothing worse than a passing scare or the tidings of an occasional loss. Perhaps their turn may come: nobody is ever entirely secure. Harry's lines have been cast in these pleasant places hitherto: he has not had to descend into the field of battle yet.

XXXI.

MR. SELBY is in full activity. He has set out to nurse the constituency, and has selected for his first rôle the farming squire. He knows no more about agriculture than I do about astronomy, and looks the part no better than he acts it. He wears wonderful breeches and gaiters, which seem to hurt him somewhere,

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and the character isn't convincing when you come to his necktie. Force of habit or want of imagination have kept him faithful to the heavy scarf and jewelled pin which have no doubt been the envy of generations of office clerks. He appears at markets with a straw in his mouth (I don't know whether this is his reading of the part or a suggestion of Palmerston), and he looks like a combination of a comic stage-landlord and a superannuated stable-boy. On market days he frequents inns and hotels where farmers assemble for their early dinner, and, unless I am much mistaken, his nursing is never deficient in proper administration of the bottle. His talk may be insipid, but the landlord's tap is generally sound enough. What he will end by promising to advocate, goodness only knows. He understands nothing and assents to everything, so that he can hardly be expected to recognise all his commitments. He is a stout protectionist, and invincibly opposed to taxation of food. He is a terrible fellow when he handles landlords, though he has a curious

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tenderness for pleasure-grounds, which he would regard as sanctuary. I suppose he would reckon parks as pleasure-ground: you see, he does not own any arable land. I fancy he has pledged his Party, if returned, to an infallible supply of sunshine and rain in due season and right quantities. He talks too much sometimes, and gets into trouble by proclaiming the wrongs of the poor labourer. He has got hold of it that the landlord is to house him better, but he gets confused over the question of wages paid by the farmers, and tells them a few home truths when nothing is further from his purpose. He will be a model M.P. He has no convictions, except upon matters of personal application, and his political opinions are gibberish. Consequently he will always vote obediently with his Party. I am becoming so lukewarm a partisan that I don't care which side is in so long as the country is well governed; and I am by no means sure that it makes as much difference as we profess to believe. At every change of Government we are told by the

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'outs' that the country is going to be ruined: as far as I can see, however, things go on without any violent fluctuations. At all events, we move slowly. And this in spite of our Party system, which I take to be astounding. If a dweller on the planet Mars were told that in this enterprising and enlightened age we still accepted, without ridicule and indignation, the fact that half our chosen and trusted legislators see every problem and series of problems in one light, and that the other half are equally agreed in taking an opposite view, he would say that it was a coincidence so remarkable as to tax his powers of belief: that we never question the justice and reason of it would probably appear still less credible; yet so we have it. It is contrary to nature and to all experience, and yet we live contentedly under the imposition as if it were no less obvious than the succession of the seasons and the rising of the morning sun. One must be outside politics to take a dispassionate view. I used to beat my Party drum as lustily as any man; I can't help

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realising now that from hollowness came the sound and the fury. Take the education question, which is always with us in a more or less pronounced form. The warring of sects goes on as bitterly as it did in the days of the Tudors and the Stuarts. I see and hear my political friends clamouring for their religious principles as though their souls were on fire: yet I know that many never go to church; that few indeed give a thought to the religious training of their own children; that when the headmastership of Eton is vacant, a large percentage of her sons advocate the appointment of a layman, having little faith in the clerical influence. When I taxed one ardent protagonist, he admitted that his daughter had no religious training because he personally had no religious belief; yet for the village school he would insist upon this same instruction as the one hope and charter of salvation. Meanwhile the word education is never heard in these discussions; diatribes, perhaps, is a better word; I believe it includes the ideas of bitterness and long duration.

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'Man dreams of fame while woman wakes to love:' visions of greatness are crowding so fast upon the enamoured father that I don't suppose he has eyes for the sorrowful awakening of his daughter, who I am afraid is enamoured most painfully and truly. Nobody has been through fiercer fire than myself, and I am always inclined to hail and succour a wounded comrade if I can. The difficulty is that I don't know how to set about it. Any one can blurt out, 'I am sorry for you;' nobody can hope to distil the precious fragrance of consolation without tact and charm. I possess little tact and no charm at all. My sensitiveness only tends to make me shy and self-conscious when I wish to be entirely considerate and sympathetic. Charm is the most exquisite gift of the gods and the most elusive; it is not definite, like beauty or wit; the only property which one can identify with it is a pleasant voice. Voices can produce effects as contrary as any produced by a sedative and a mustard plaster. Some people make me wish to sit still and be talked to: others make me

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wish to scream. I fancy my voice is about as musical as a rusty wheelbarrow, and if I attempt a direct appeal, I am formal, mechanical, impertinent. Another man would probably be *in loco amici* whilst I am still blundering through banalities. Probably our range of sympathy is limited, like our other good and bad qualities. Some of us have a comprehensive love of humanity: many care little for their neighbours, and these must not be blamed. Their selfishness is a natural defect, like their powers of comprehension, and you should no more require a stupid person to educate himself into cleverness than an unsympathetic nature to elevate itself into philanthropy. You will only get platitudes from the one and attitudes from the other. Well, here am I deeply concerned on Miss Selby's behalf, and incapable of coming to her assistance. I throw myself in her way as much as I can, oblivious of her father's rudeness: it is no time for punctilios. Don't you think it is always possible to tell when a woman has once 'woke to love?' Something has gone;

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something come. The change in this case is remarkable: the noisy frivolity has vanished, meekness and sedateness have taken its place. We have long talks now, and they seem to grow easier and more familiar. Under the veneer there was good stuff; the stripping process was drastic, but it was beneficial. I think she likes talking to me: perhaps I do best to practise no art and trust to nature. Either my presence is congenial or it is not: I can't make it so by stratagem. Intuition is the only guide.

I said something to you lately about identity: there can be no doubt of a change here. This is not the same being that I met when I first came, any more than I am the same being whom you met nearly twenty years ago. You have known twenty of me; I have known two of her. If you and I had drifted apart then, we should not have recognised one another now, except by facial resemblance. If I don't see this lady again for years, and probably I shan't, we shall meet again, if we ever do meet, as new acquaint-

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ances. I remember years ago I was enjoying myself immensely at Cannes. I had made a number of new acquaintances; daily intercourse and common occupations had inspired intimacy and attachment. Suddenly appeared one of the closest of my old Eton friends: I wanted to be glad, and I wasn't. We had never met since Eton days; we had gone opposite ways; he had matured more quickly than I, but neither of us had anything of the schoolboy left. We professed delight at our meeting, and we had nothing to say to one another. I was impatient to go back to my new friends; I could see it was a relief to him to say good-bye. Yet I don't think we had much cause for shame. Had we been able to transfer ourselves back to the old state, our heartiness would have been as of old. But we were in a new state, and there had not been time for us to assimilate. The north-country manufacturer and the Cannes flâneur had nothing in common. There may be a communion of mind here and there so intimate and profound that it can resist all strains, and

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never become weak or stale; but Doctor Johnson was right enough when he counselled us to 'keep our friendships in repair.' Many connections are formed on temporary and fortuitous grounds, such as my Cannes alliances; they serve their purpose, but one does not expect them to last, and they don't. They belong to a passing phase of our personalities, and with the ending of that phase the influences perish. My present phase associates me with a woman whom I regarded a few weeks ago with an aversion which I am sure was reciprocated. Now I am trying to minister to a mind diseased, and she is accepting my clumsy efforts with every semblance of gratitude and satisfaction.

XXXII.

My difficulty about the political meeting was solved without ingenuity of mine. In these matters there is an inevitable jealousy

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amongst the local mandarins : each one wants to show his importance. Consequently, two of them, without speaking to each other or to any one else, wrote and persuaded a Member of Parliament to come down. At best, it was a trumpery affair, not worth a journey from London : however, so pressing and deceptive had been the invitations that Howard Green and a man called Ellison were both trapped. I wish I had seen their faces and heard their language when they found they were on the same errand. All M.P.'s like to have the field clear for their operations, and resent the intrusion of a rival performer. It must have been a further offence, though one which united them in disgust, when the size and character of the meeting manifested themselves. Mr. Darbyshire made the best chairman's speech I ever heard : ' Ladies and gentlemen, you have not come to listen to me. I ask Mr. Green to be kind enough to address us first.' Which he proceeded to do for an hour and twenty minutes—considerably more than a minute apiece for each member of his audience. Then

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came one of the mandarins. Instead of following Mr. Darbyshire's example and seconding the resolution *pro forma*, he must needs wander off into a rambling discourse and talk abject nonsense for forty minutes. When Ellison's turn arrived he curtly remarked that he had to catch a train to London, and after a dozen sentences marched off the platform. Then I, who originally was to have been the star of the company, appeared on the programme. However, I knew that if the other mandarins were cut short in their orations, deadly feuds would ensue, so I persuaded the chairman to cancel me and give them their heads. As it was, the proceedings threatened to be interminable, and nobody can have regretted my eclipse. So, you see, I was saved from the danger of aggravating Mr. Selby's grievance. In fact, I shall pretend my silence was due to consideration for his feelings. This is the way in which these ridiculous ceremonies are conducted: they give a great deal of trouble and annoyance, and I don't suppose they influence a vote. A conjuror is

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much more likely to attract sympathy and enlist supporters for the candidate who provides him.

Green had brought some luggage on the chance of finding hospitality. His friend did not rise to the occasion : I knew Mr. Darbyshire would not like him if he had him, so I was obliged to ask him to come here. I never knew a more extraordinary man. My conception of a 'bounder' is some one without any sense of proportion ; without moderation or modesty ; who mistakes his own position in the world. This fellow has somehow convinced himself that he is a rising, or risen, statesman of European celebrity. How he can maintain his illusion puzzles me. Beyond the puffs which he suborns the Pressmen, by much entertaining, to publish, he never attracts attention. Yet he gravely assures you in a sort of mysterious whisper that he was careful in some speech to let Germany know this, or assure Russia of that ; and that the line which he intends to take with a view to bringing the Colonies to their senses is so-and-so. I took

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him home and patched up the best meal to be had without notice. First he gave me an encore performance of the speech to which I had just listened ; next a résumé of a very important one which he delivered in Parliament last week ; then an epitome of a third with which he is to favour his constituents next week. This led to a tirade against the disgraceful incompetence of political reporting in the newspapers. It never seems to occur to him, bless him ! that they can report well enough when they think the public want it. He kept me up, smoking and jawing, until I was half mad with boredom and fatigue. Next morning he was at it again from the moment he came down to the moment he left the house. He was anxious to make me understand that he consorted exclusively with eminent public men and ladies of exalted station. If he knew about the 'gang' and their ways, which he probably doesn't, he would no doubt pretend he was intimate with them. He complained that he is never allowed to spend an evening quietly, nor stay

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at home over Sunday. 'My wife never sees me,' he said, with a shrug of pity for her. I fancy his dinners and visits seldom include her. Probably it is not known that he is married: he is not touchy, and he recognises that he is wanted for his own sake: consequently her absence need not be considered. He is a really bad type of politician, not qualified to be a useful public servant; conceited, ignorant, vulgar, and selfish. And yet he will push and shove until he secures a reward of some sort. Whether the country will be any the better or happier for his services may be doubted. He is one of the men whom I can understand enjoying Parliamentary life. We English ask to be allowed to spend time and money to secure the privilege of leading an exacting life, which is to many of us intolerably dull and in some respects insufferably irksome. We are supposed to be a mercenary race, but here we incur heavy expense gratuitously instead of demanding high wages. To this gentleman, however, I believe there is ample return in the sense of importance with

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which he is somehow able to endow himself. It might be said that I rail against these busybodies because I am an idler. I have lost my tail, and can't bear the sight of a brush on a live fox. It may be so: I never tried to disguise my infirmities. Success in public life is glorious, but it can only come to one or two per cent. of all who enter. I could never have succeeded, and the existence which is invested with so much imaginary charm to me was abhorrent. Possibly I have a lurking regret for the little flicker of distinction which a seat in Parliament had to bestow. When I see a fellow like Green assiduously fanning this flicker and calling on us to admire it as a blaze of splendour, I confess it annoys me; but whether this is because he is an impudent presumer or because I am the fox without a tail, I really don't know.

Do you suppose that any one is content with obscurity? I doubt it, because I seem to remember all through life people more or less edging towards the light. There seems to be a common inclination to bring to notice some-

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thing done, somebody known, some position occupied, some attention received — anything that may afford a little prominence in popular view. You will admit that I make no disguise of my failure in life. I have no illusions: I recognise facts and deplore them. Yet I can't help wishing sometimes that other people did not recognise them quite as distinctly as I do. Why should I want people to think better of me than I deserve? They can't deceive me, even if I hoodwink them. I have not such a saintly resignation that I am above petty vanities. It cannot be denied that there was something agreeable in the deference which the Selby family paid to my imagined consequence when I first came here. They took me for a personage in fact, and I won't deny that it would have caused me a disagreeable effort to explain that I had dropped out of my place in the world, such as it was: that I no longer was asked anywhere nor associated with any people of importance; that in fact I was as utterly insignificant and ignored as any obscure individual who might emerge from a remote

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corner of the kingdom entirely unknown. *Monstrari digito* is an eternal ambition. Nobody really likes being a nonentity, although we can't all humour our feelings to the excessive extent which has been attained by Mr. Howard Green.

XXXIII.

I HAVE been entirely bookish these last few days. There has been so much unexpected distraction that the library which I brought with me has been put to little use. Now that Harry has flown away, I am making up for lost time. The sands are running out, and I shall soon have to pack up.

I shall be sorry when the time comes: meantime I intend to get over some of the course which I had marked out for reading. I know a man who never reads: somebody once asked him whether this was literally true. 'Not quite,' he said; 'I have just been reading this month's *Bradshaw*. It is a capital

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number;' which stopped further criticism. I have had a dive into poetry again. Fiction is always easy-going; it is like sitting and listening to some one telling yarns. Historical memoirs are never out of place; it is like reading the daily papers, with this advantage, that they are more reliable and involve less waste of time. I should say that ten per cent. of the latter is worth reading and ninety per cent. of the former. A confirmed paper-reader bears the same relation to a bookman that a saunterer bears to an Alpine climber. But poetry is another thing; to appreciate it, one's mind must be attuned. It requires leisure and abstraction. You can't digest poetry in a state of preoccupation; you can't absorb it in a hurry. It is not to be wondered at if few people make the attempt; it does not form a natural accompaniment to telephones, motors, and bridge. The excuse given for this neglect is, of course, that there are no poets now. Claptrap! That is no reason for neglecting the old ones; and who reads them? Even the best are ignored. I suppose Milton is the

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most majestic of all poets—perhaps he is beyond the ken of many intellects; but take Tennyson, who is exquisitely melodious and essentially human, and therefore more easily to be appreciated by the vulgar: how often are his volumes opened in your house during the year? I have admitted the discouraging element. Poetry is a kind of coloured prose. Some prose is as beautiful as any poetry in the world, but your ordinary reader can run through this without being aware of the fact; for daily use it is the plain and practical method of expression. Poetry aspires to something more. Pictures may vary from an oleograph to a Madonna by Raphael; poetry may be represented by anything from lines which rhyme and scan more or less to that consummate song in ‘Maud,’ for instance; or, beyond that, to Milton’s sonnets. Knowledge of pictures is not easily come by, and it is curious to observe the different effects produced by great art upon a trained and an untrained intelligence. Perception of beauty in poetry is not to be gained by mere skimming

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and glancing, and it is presumably because few people have time that the love of it has grown cold. Perhaps some day a director of fashion will recall it to life. Sometimes these whims are entirely beneficial. I don't know who it was that lately made gardening a polite and necessary hobby, but it has justified the author. As far as I can judge, it affords genuine pleasure and provides a commendable occupation. The music craze was, of course, a pretence and insincere. Poetry might fall on good ground and bring forth abundantly. The inevitable obstacle is the small allowance of time for private use. Except when they are alone at home, which is seldom enough, your friends attempt nothing but turning over the latest novel. When I inveigh, as my habit is, against our public-school system on the ground that Latin and Greek are for ordinary boys indigestible and innutritious, and that a modern education would be more useful, I am always told that boys will always do their modern reading for themselves. They don't. I have repeatedly watched boys between the ages of

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fifteen and twenty in country houses. They never open a book. In the summer they are out of doors all day ; in the winter they occupy their time indoors with billiards or any other game they can find : or they talk. This may be all for the best ; but it remains a fact. De Quincey somewhere estimates that if a man lives for seventy years he can only count upon eleven and a half of them for intellectual exercises. I have often tried to make out what becomes of one's time. Here am I alone, and my own master. Let us suppose that I sleep for eight hours, walk for three, and read for five, which is not much under the circumstances. What becomes of the other eight ? I am not washing, dressing, and eating continually. I suppose one muddles it all away waiting to begin the next thing. All the more must one do this when there are a number of other human beings in the house ; all the less easy will one find it then to detach one's attention and apply it to thoughtful occupation, especially if one happens to be a vigorous, pleasure-loving youth.

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I don't pretend that a love of poetry is to be looked for in every 'soaring human boy.' The taste is not unfrequently regarded as a sign of effeminacy and a feeble mind. A young married woman once confided to me that she had heard some one saying ill-natured things about me, and that she had fought my battle. I thanked her, and elicited the fact that a friend of hers had declared that I wrote poetry: 'I told her I knew it wasn't true.' I did not exclaim, 'Good God, and this is fame!' but I endeavoured to find out what seemed to her so malicious in the suggestion. I think it was an impression that it represented me as an insipid and unmanly creature; and I doubt whether a schoolboy would be likely to quarrel with her judgment. He may be interested now and then if he should happen to see any poetry at all, but there is a very large field which he is certain to leave unexplored. It requires a distinct taste or some conscientious training to secure appreciation for such pieces as Matthew Arnold's 'Philomela,' for example.

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or 'A Farewell,' which Coventry Patmore wrote. Here they are:—

‘Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make
 resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through
 the leaves!
Again—thou hearest?
Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!’

All these lines are beautifully phrased and modulated; they fall with exquisite cadence on the ear, but they display no particular method: they are of different value and disjointed, preserving no measure and achieving no obvious effect. There is no reason why the same delicate thoughts and right selection of words should not have been used for a

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graceful passage without the conventional—perhaps unconventional—cast of verse. I don't doubt that many an honest Etonian would be astonished to learn that this was poetry.

Now take Patmore. Notwithstanding their charm and elevation, there is no particular reason why the following lines should not have been printed in continuous form. They rhyme sooner or later, and as Doctor Johnson once said, 'Why, sir, this is better ;' but it is difficult to extract from them the tuneful lilt of the true lyric.

' With all my will but much against my heart,
We two must part.
My very dear,
Our solace is, the sad road lies so clear.
It needs no art,
With faint averted feet,
And many a tear
In our opposed path to persevere.
Go thou to East, I West.
We will not say

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There's any hope, it is so far away.
But oh, my Best,
When the one darling of our widowhood,
The nursling Grief,
Is dead. . . . And so on.

What would an Eton boy say of that curious, mystical effusion of Browning's, 'Another Way of Love'? If he were indulging in his first love affair, he might find solace in that tender song, 'Mary Morison,' or anything else that will stimulate a sigh; if not, I fancy that Whyte Melville and Rudyard Kipling will supply all that his poetical inclination is likely to demand.

I have frequently noticed, by the way, that unpoetical people, when they do read poetry, prefer Pope. After all, that is no sagacious observation: he is not likely to irritate their senses or confound their predilections with the familiar pages of worldly wisdom which he rolled off.

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XXXIV.

I HAVE a particular grudge against Sundays. Not a vulgar prejudice or heathenish distaste, but a matter-of-fact objection to the passing of another week. I have a passionate love of summer, and a hatred, amounting to dread, of our dark and bitter winters. When I watch the meadows and the valleys and the hills glowing in the hot noon I get rid of some of my dismal thoughts and doleful forebodings, and enjoy a comfortable persuasion that all's right in the world. I know it isn't; but for the moment it seems as if it were. I can't help thinking that consols must go up on such a day as this; or would if it were not Sunday. Well: here is another milestone on the road to winter. I suppose that winter is welcome to people who hunt, and not intolerable to those who have a good circulation. Children find pleasure in snowballing, and skaters rejoice in a frost. I dread a fall in the thermometer mindful of the multitudes who lack all means of protection. Every night in London as I go out to dinner,

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shivering in my fur coat, I see certain sellers of matches and laces, who appear to have established a claim to their respective stands. When I come home after eating and drinking the value of a week's extravagant luxury to them, and retire to my warm bed, there they are beating their frozen feet upon the ground and moaning out their unheeded plea for custom. The bestowal of a few pence is no remedy for the evil and no comfort to me. I can't readjust the balance, and whatever I were to do or leave undone the misery would still be awful. But when to the normal trials of privation are added the physical pain of cold, the spectacle is one which I contemplate with horror. Happy are the thoughtless and the young who don't trouble themselves about such things. What can't be cured must be endured, and it is surely better to endure the ill with serenity and indifference than with care and heaviness of heart. Jane Austen preaches this in *Emma*: 'If we feel for the wretched, enough to do all we can for them, the rest is empty sympathy, only distressing to

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ourselves.' The questions why these poor wretches should have to suffer so much and what is to be their recompense, constitute for me the most difficult problems of the Christian faith. The pious aphorisms with which Bildad the Shuhite sought to administer ghostly comfort to Job don't somehow appear to work out right in practice. It is not easy to see how these wretches are to have any hope, or charity towards their neighbours, or respect for themselves. I forget the exact figure at which Becky Sharp put her potential virtue: I feel that there must be a figure below which one cannot reasonably ask for any virtue at all. I suppose drink and tobacco give these sufferers some physical pleasure: they seem to be not without an instinct for companionship. You never see them laugh, but I think they are capable of merriment, even if the cause be mischievous or blackguardly. How contented and amiable and high-principled we ought all to be with our advantages and fine opportunities. I believe that self-respect is the surest foundation of

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happiness. If you can satisfy your own standard of right living, there should be little cause for discontent and petty vexations. I don't mean that you should only seek to satisfy your own ideas of enjoyment. Forgetfulness of self has been designated as the sure badge of a gentleman, but very often it leads to the manufacture of the trifle and the toady. Dickens says that our weaknesses and meanesses are usually committed for the sake of people whom we most despise. I think it is so. One need not respect or admire one's neighbours and their ways, but there is a tendency to conform with their tone and temper, not from any benevolent desire of self-effacement, but in order to keep oneself in the picture. It is rather cowardly and slavish; but as the world is regulated it marks the line of least resistance.

Sometimes the awkward doubt occurs to me whether an unpopular man, like myself, can have any self-respect. I need not feel ashamed of making no progress with people whose ways are not my ways, and whose com-

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pany I never attempted to cultivate; but as regards the greater number of acquaintances, whom on the whole I liked, and with whom I should have been glad to live in friendly intercourse, when it became manifest that with all my good intentions I failed to commend myself to them and that I was not one of those whose company they desired, must I not perceive that I have more cause for self-abasement than self-respect? I think the consciousness of popularity must be an incentive to high ideas. A misanthrope may be confident of one thing: he is not fit for marriage. If a man cannot live happily with his own self, whom he understands and naturally loves, he can never be a comfortable mate for any other human being.

Yet at the worst I am incomparably better off than the forlorn beings of whom I was speaking. Money may not be able to buy happiness, but it can buy off a great deal of unhappiness—that is one thing. I have many sources of pleasure at command; if there are many more which I desire and cannot have, at

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all events there are alternatives within my reach. My pessimism is intellectual : theirs is physical, moral, spiritual, universal. I once asked an East-end clergyman whether he would try and reclaim them by direct spiritual appeal or by first nourishing their bodies. He said that the two processes must coincide; which begged the question. My conviction is that a better physical state is a necessary preparation for attending to edifying precepts. That is why gifts of money, though they are by no means so admirable as the devotion of labour and care, must surely be beneficial.

I should like to get a missionary and a political economist on a platform and make them argue the relative merits of philanthropy and thrift. The latter is always recommended as a virtue, and to make provision for the future is one of the duties of man. If every one sold all he had and gave to the poor, we should be a bankrupt nation. A tithe is too large a tax for one man; too small for another. If we are not to divest ourselves of everything, and regard comfort as self-indulgence and

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hospitality as sinful, then the extent of our self-denial must have a limit somewhere, as must a fall of rain ; but it is difficult to locate it.

Injudicious and indiscriminate giving encourages misuse and waste : it would facilitate matters if one could put these donations in trust. After all there can be no personal predilection : one only seeks to break off one's fragment from the load of affliction ; what individual is to be eased of his or her burden cannot make any difference.

Personal inclination prompts to waste of another kind. There is something attractive in the act of giving a present to a person you like, and something satisfactory in giving one to a person whom you don't particularly like, but who, by use and custom, ought to have one. The consequence is that at weddings, or on birthdays, or when Christmas comes, we spend extravagantly upon useless trumpery which nobody wants or knows what to do with, whilst the cry of the naked and the hungry still rises to heaven. The principle

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cannot be condemned. One may legitimately wish to show kindness to one's intimates; even to give something sensible to a bride, a youth coming of age, or one who has a want still unsupplied at Christmas. It cannot be wrong to ask your friends to dinner when it is right to feed strangers; and if you ask them, you must give them no less than civilised customs require, and pay the market price. But it is very troublesome to feel that in all hoarding or spending, in giving or refusing, you are very likely doing that which you ought not to have done or leaving undone that which you ought to have done.

A lady of my acquaintance was lately singing somebody's praises; she said he gave such charming dinners; also that he was so good: he had given up his brougham, so that he might have more to bestow in charity. I could not help wondering whether he ought not to give up the charming dinners as well. Of course it is possible for a man to walk, or travel in an omnibus: but it is equally possible to exist on a 'joint and vegetables,' such

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as one sees advertised in the windows of public - houses, instead of giving 'charming dinners.'

This dissertation has all arisen out of an innocent observation on the weather, which shows what a fruitful topic it is. No wonder it is so popular. I have been sitting in my garden to-night, listening to the silence, if you know what I mean. I can't pretend that the sweet scents appealed to me much, because I was smoking nearly all the time. I amused myself by trying to picture the same setting for snow and tempest. Happily I did not succeed very well; so that all my impressions were negative: but as I believe is the case in chemistry, a positive result was produced of a most effective kind. There is no 'husbandry in heaven' for the moment, and the lights are all burning. I never can remember anything about the stars: I should never be able to save myself in a desert by their guidance. Likewise I should never be able to extricate myself from a dilemma in a foreign country, because I cannot learn any language. In both cases

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one is at a disadvantage : yet I enjoy travelling in my loutish, ignorant way, and I take great pleasure in watching the stars. It irritates me when I hear people reckoning the seasons by the coming or going of a planet, and there is something annoying in the fluent French of a person whose superiority one is not anxious to admit. Natural defects one must suffer with as much equanimity as possible, but these are deficiencies which an effort might have remedied. I think there must be a form of intellectual hydrophobia ; a raging thirst for knowledge and an obstinate inability to drink.

By-the-bye, I noticed to-day for the first time that my man William is getting fat : this will serve me as a *memento mori*. It is a remarkable fact that men of his class are invariably without the instinct for exercise. I never knew one of them yet that took any of his own free will, or cared two straws what the neglect of it produced. I think they are inclined to admire corpulence and expect to be admired for their own. William will be a daily

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deterrent to any tendency to slothfulness on my part. I shall look on him and remember the doom of the sluggard.

XXXV.

I HAVE been spending a Sunday in polite society. The Duchess of Leicestershire invited me. I suppose she felt that under the circumstances she could not help it. I was not very anxious to go, but I had no valid excuse.

It was a large and heterogeneous assembly. One or two of 'the gang;' Shaw, the artist; the omniscient Willett; one or two young bloods; and old Lady Maria Delaval, *inter alios* and *alias*. Mrs. Claude Udney, of the first category, was as frisky as ever. She is a marvel to me; I can't understand how anybody so silly can get through life, nor what is the secret of her popularity. She is very pretty, but whereas that can hardly account for the devotion of men, without any supplement of

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brains, it is almost enough to make other women jealous and suspicious. Yet they all make a pet of her. The King's English is not copious enough to convey her luminous ideas, so she depends largely on a peculiar patois: people and things are divided into two classes, tooty and smuggins, according to her favour or disapproval. She said it was such a tooty morning that it was rather smuggins to go to church. However, she went. I think she was conscious of the fact that dear old Lady Maria was turning a critical eye on her. Her sense of humour is not acute. On the way home I made some trivial remark about phrases in the Prayer-book which might be better expressed, and instanced the appeal to the Almighty, 'Who alone workest great marvels,' to make our clergy wise. She said she didn't see why we should want all the clergymen to be stupid. Their rector at home was quite a tooty little man, and had just bought a motor, which she described with great technical knowledge. We happened to talk of the Bishop of London, and she asked

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if he was still alive. I think she had vague recollections of Smithfield and the stake, and was under the impression that there had been an end of this dignitary once and for ever. One of the young bloods, who appears to be temporarily attached to her, said that some of her utterances ought to be written down and put into a book. Lady Maria said her conversation might be added as a special paragraph to the Litany; which was a little severe. She does not chatter quite as much as one might expect, because she has to hold her tongue at bridge, and it is as essential to her existence to have cards in her hand as air in her lungs. I understand she is a very bad player, yet even that does not impair her prestige. In fact, she is a living proof of the fact that fashion is a wind that bloweth where it listeth, not regulated by rules or reason, and not to be trimmed or turned from its capricious course.

Mr. Shaw professes to admire her prodigiously, but, unless I do him grave injustice, he may 'love her beauty passing well,' but he

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loves 'the gang' even better. He suggests to me the Agricultural Society rather than the Royal Academy; there is nothing spiritual about him, least of all when a meal is in progress. His pictures confirm this impression of the man. He is a skilful impressionist; almost a caricaturist. There is much sensual loveliness in his portraits of women, and he never misses a bad trait or *suggestio mali*. As far as I am capable of judging, his execution is often faulty, and some of it scamped and inadequate. There is no refinement or modesty in his work. It is the audacious admiration of the eye, not the reverent worship of the heart: in fact, he is a brilliant painter, not a true artist. There is not only a scent of the ballroom, even a suspicion of patchouli about his portraits; there is almost the gusto of the dinner-table. Yet here he is, puffing his great cheeks and rolling his bright eyes in the liveliest coteries of society, and determined to be a fashionable portrait-painter in every sense of the word. The breeze has caught his sails, and carries him along merrily, whilst his

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less fortunate consorts are grievously becalmed. I hear that at breakfast he declared a great desire to paint Lady Maria, to which she replied that nature had made her quite ugly enough; he had better leave her alone. I don't think she approves of him. She is a warm-hearted old lady, but a stern moralist. I was not there. I can't stand late breakfasts, and can never understand what people do with themselves till ten o'clock. They can't be all asleep, and there is nothing more tiresome than lying in bed waiting for the time when one can get up. I always have my *café complet* early in my room. If the rolls are properly made, and the jam is good, this is the pleasantest meal of the day; the only one I enjoy. To have this at leisure, then to sit by an open window with a cigarette and a book, is my dearest luxury. There is a perfect sense of freedom and privacy. Your mind is fresh and clear, nothing can have happened so early to have caused you inconvenience or annoyance, and you eventually meet the world with your nervous system well set up and fortified

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against the onslaught of all the Mr. Shaws and Mrs. Claude Udneys that fate may call upon you to encounter.

Mr. Willett was rather out in the cold. He offered samples of his intimacy with European affairs, and his familiarity with continental monarchs; but Mrs. Udney said she thought foreign kings were generally smug-gins, and the young bloods did not seem to know that foreign countries had any politics; to them it was a British institution to fill up the interval between the end of fox-hunting and the twelfth of August. Lady Maria rather disconcerted him, because for each celebrity whom he could produce she had something to say of a generation further back. She appears to have known every one worth knowing for the last hundred years, and whereas Mr. Willett descants with all the dogmatic assertiveness of an article in a magazine, she relates with all the charm of a volume of memoirs.

But the visit was memorable for another reason. For a first time since her marriage I found myself in a country house with her

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whom we never name. I don't know whether the duchess arranged this in mischief or under a mistaken sense of kindness. I am sure she knows the story. I never knew the husband well; but I bear him no malice, and I like him. Of her I know not what to say or think. At first I was desperate, and thought of bolting. Her gaiety with all the world and her indifference to me stung like cruel furies set loose for my special torment. It is always said that remorse is the worst of all afflictions. In my case it was a craving for the past, a protest against such a shattering of sacred memories, not less bitter and unbearable. She confirmed my theory about change of identity: she was a different woman altogether. I don't think, however, that she dislikes me, or that my presence angers her: she does not care so long as I keep out of her way. I climbed on my high horse at once, and resolved to play my part accordingly; but every tone of her voice, every turn of her beautiful head, every familiar gesture sent a thrill along my veins which was little less than physical pain. I

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watched her with an odd kind of detachment, trying to make out whether my love had really an alloy of hatred. I never pretended to calm myself with philosophic reasoning, but I am not sure that the two passions do not meet at a common boundary and run into one another unobserved. I had satisfied myself that this was so in my case; rage and resentment were going to cure me: when she suddenly came and talked to me quietly about trivial things, and in an instant I was as much her lover as ever. I may be told that a woman's vanity prompted her to keep me in hand. I don't understand women or their vagaries, but I do know that she has no desire whatever for my devotion: it bores her, and she does not want to be reminded of a past folly. Moreover, in her new world it is a point of honour to be exclusive in her intimacies, and it would never do to admit the attentions of one who, from their point of view, does not exist. I suppose it was an impulse of good nature, of which I don't say that she is incapable.

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It is not my theory that all women are entirely bad : that would be a foolish pose. I go no further than to admit with sorrow that they are not the dear creatures of my old ideals ; she probably looked on me as one is apt to look on some discarded object which offends the eye all the more because it once gave pleasure and is now an irritating encumbrance ; something which one would like to turn out of the house and yet cannot easily remove. She talked to me as she might stoop to give a relenting pat to a dog which she had begun to dislike and was determined to banish. She would rather I had not been there : as it was, she might as well be decently civil. She could not imagine how she had ever been such a fool as to make herself unhappy about me ; but she was quit of me now, and certainly I never tried to be tiresome. Moreover, at the moment she had nothing better to do. That is how I diagnose the working of her mind : that is how I affected her. How did she affect me ? I wish to write dispassionately. My inclination is to rant and give you a touch of rhodomon-

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tade, but I don't want to whine nor to attitudinise. Nevertheless, I may ease my mind by stating a plain fact. If I had only been struggling with some malignant disease and was suddenly conscious of a recrudescence, I don't suppose that I should write to you in a panic, nor should I treat it as a subject for jest. I hope that I should state the fact temperately and bravely. Here have I been for many months enduring a disease of mind of which the worst symptoms had to some extent abated. I knew that I could never wholly recover tone, nor lose every trace and record of my disorder. But the fever had subsided. It has come again. When one is undergoing this obsession there is an extraordinary outburst of egoism. One wishes to impart every trivial thought, to relate every trifling experience to the being by whom one is possessed. If one cannot see her and speak to her, and live in the delirium of hourly contact, there is a passionate desire to pour oneself out in writing. That is why the love-letters of wise men belong to literature and

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those of fools to journalism. Both are human documents which reveal the ingenuous spirit of a man in full cry, very curious to observe. Many a man, wise generally, may descend to folly in these circumstances: many a dullard may become ennobled: in both cases you have something genuine with no veneer of pretence or self-deception. I could cover pages now, as I used to do, and feel the happier for writing to her, but this outlet is denied me, and the tumult is dammed up to exhaust itself as best it may. I really believe that the hero of melodrama who ruffles his hair and rolls his eyes is not ridiculous after all; it would be the most correct and natural manner of expressing our feelings if we wished to take an audience into our confidence. I feel quite in the mood to perform these antics. Self-respect reminds me that she does not care, and that I am abasing myself in suffering her scorn so miserably; but self-respect is a chilly sentiment beside the passion which consumes all patience and reason and discretion, and leaves one's pride in ashes. And this devastation a.

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man may undergo at the hands of five feet odd and so many pounds of flesh and bones, amongst the millions upon earth, no whit better nor less vulnerable than any other composite being of them all; possibly, as in my case, unstable, ungracious, unmerciful. Yet a thousandfold more to be desired than all the heaped-up treasures of the world! Fortune treated me shabbily in devising this situation. Had I known that she would be there, I should have gone, I confess, as surely as a drunkard will seize a bottle which is offered him. But I would not have contrived it of my own accord, as a drunkard may subdue his habits so long as he has no opportunity for indulgence. In fact, I shall always entertain a friendly sympathy for these victims in future. Those who are free cannot appreciate the excess of the allurements or the heroism of the struggle needed to resist it. Seeing what foul deeds may be credited to those gentlemen who plead the other motive; I am not sure that we ought to boast such complacent superiority.

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I fell this time not altogether through my own fault, but the mischief is none the less complete. I don't know what is to be the end of it. I feel old and tired. I wish I could clap on twenty or thirty years and have done with it. I remember being delighted, upon reading 'Rabbi ben Ezra' for the first time, to discover that I had long ago formed an opinion which had commended itself to Browning:—

‘Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know,
being old.’

I want to reach the age when all the doubts and contingencies of life are settled. If some good has been accomplished, then *laus deo*: if all has been failure, then at all events we know the worst. There is no more uncertainty and vacillation. Until the hour of death we are liable to affliction through our own physical or material misfortune, or through the death or suffering of those we love, if any such there be: but it is the end that awaits us then; not the difficult, dangerous road that once lay

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stretched before us unknown and apparently unending. I wish I could think I was nearer the end of mine.

XXXVI.

MANY thanks for your charming letter. All that you say is true, and I should be wise if I mended my ways and curbed my tongue according to your precepts; but as Job observed, 'Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt,' and I shall probably continue to conduct myself like the colt of a wild ass.

I must flee away; my peace is broken, and I have taken a dislike to my haven: it no longer has any hold on me. I never was a gardener: my life has been cast in stony places, namely, London pavements, and there has never been any inducement to me to watch the succession of flowers in due season, except in shop-windows; a moth-eaten old man potters about here and does what he

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likes, leaving undone what he doesn't like. It would be a daily worry to me if I had to superintend him and I could write a companion volume to a popular work, calling it 'The garden that I hate.'

Some one nearly set the house on fire last night; this might have decided my movements for me. It is not a pleasant reflection that in the midst of security and ease, one is always liable to this awful visitation; I suppose it is the sentiment of superstition in us which makes us fearfully ascribe it to an angry deity as the Act of God: it is generally the act of a stupid servant or the result of bad building. I have a horror of it. If I were burnt out, no compensation would avail: the accumulations of my life would vanish and I should have to begin again. They have no money value, but to me they are precious beyond price. Anyhow, I must go. But where? Sometimes my inclination turns to London, and I am tempted to come up for a visit before every one has gone away: I confess to a secret desire such as prompts the peacock to spread

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his tail. It is a mistake to suppose that appearance is a matter of importance only to a woman. To put it on original ground, there never was a play acted or a story written in which the hero was not endowed with good looks and elegant attire; from this I infer that it accords with our sense of fitness. It cannot be wholly indifferent to a man, as is commonly alleged, what he looks like; if it were so, all literature would misinterpret human nature. A philosopher should desire to gaze on good-looking people and be content with his own ungainliness; but most of us are too self-conscious for that. Accuse me of what vanity and folly you please, but let me admit that I have a mind to lay aside my slovenly rags and put on my best clothes again.

Yet, what is the good? I have thrown up my part. 'The fault was mine, the fault was mine,' if you like. The fact remains that I have isolated myself, and nowhere do I feel so utterly lonely and forlorn as in London, where I cannot go a quarter of a mile without meeting some one that I know. Mine is the

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anguish of the restless dead when they try, as we are sometimes told, to recover touch with the friends they have left on earth, who heed them not and speedily forget them. I don't believe that I could have helped it: I watched the disease developing in me, killing all my social qualities as surely as physical vitality is destroyed by a malignant growth. Yet the fault may have been mine as well as the misfortune: and if now I have no part to play, when the whim seizes me to reappear upon the stage, it may be that I have no claim to your pity.

Fortunately, I have to go soon to my Militia Camp—perhaps the most useful, healthy, and happy month of all my year. I know that my brother-officers look on me as a moody and solitary creature; but they show no definite dislike, and I am very happy in their company. Later, I go abroad, and once more I protest against the futility of the education which made no attempt to teach me foreign tongues. Without any knowledge of languages—and I am too old and too fixed in

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my habits to begin learning now—it is little better to travel in foreign countries than to travel blindfold. Apart from the risk of losing your way or your luggage, you can never hope to see places properly, appreciate what you do see thoroughly, nor understand the national character at all. It is strange, indeed, that human beings who live within a short journey of one another, who eat the same food, wear the same clothes, worship the same God, use the same civilisation, and meet in common trade, should be utterly debarred from the first essential of human intercourse — namely, speech. However, I shall go on my voyage as heretofore, dumb and deaf, losing a full half of the pleasure and advantage, but making the best of what remains to me.

I am delighted to hear such an excellent account of your health, though I cannot help thinking that it is in spite of, not because of, your new diet : unless, indeed, you really like it. I am convinced that nature prescribes for itself what it wants. Whatever you instinctively desire, that eat and drink with con-

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fidence and impunity; whatever you 'distaste,' as Dizzy says, that shun immediately, no matter what custom or etiquette or the commendations of your host may enjoin. I should never dream of asking a doctor now what to eat, drink, or avoid. I know what is good or bad for me much better than any one else. The most sensible doctor I ever met was one whom I consulted years ago as to rules of living. He said, 'You must surely know by this time what suits you better than I do.' I did myself much harm upon one occasion by going for a long sea voyage, and upon another by spending the winter in a climate which nearly drove me mad—in both cases obeying a doctor's orders. There is the immortal story of an eminent London physician who found that all his instructions had been anticipated by his patient's inclinations, and could afford no better return for his guineas than a recommendation to breakfast at nine instead of half-past eight. Old Emerson declares that he once took it into his head that he was ill, and submitted his symptoms to a

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shining light of medicine. His was a fair test, because he is the healthiest man in England. However, something had to be said, and it was decreed that tobacco was the root of all the evil. He declared he could not live without it, and demanded a daily minimum of four cigars besides his morning pipe. He was reduced to three as the extreme limit; and, inasmuch as he has for years smoked one after lunch and one after dinner, neither more nor less, he said he had no reason to complain.

Your amateur doctor is worse. Half one's acquaintance have a craze about a diet or a nostrum. Again and again I have been urged to live on one of those compounds which are advertised for a time and heard of no more. I believe a bran-mash is good for a horse. Probably these messes do no harm, provided that people do not depend on them exclusively too long; which is seldom the case. I was once induced to give up wine altogether, and drink nothing with my meals. Three or four months of this nearly killed me. I was never more thoroughly ill. If you have a de-

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finite ailment or disease, a doctor can diagnose the symptoms and administer the proper remedies; but it is certain that no two people are identical, internally or externally: consequently it is absurd to suppose that any one climate or diet is good for all varieties of temperament and physique. I am not an apologist for intemperance, but I can't recall an instance of a man pre-eminent in public life who was a teetotaller: certainly Pitt and Fox were not; nor were Beaconsfield and Gladstone in more moderate days; and from all accounts one gathers that the height of Bismarck's power was only equalled by the depth of his potations. I don't believe in asceticism: those people who boast of their frugality and abstemiousness are seldom remarkable for their *mens sana* or *corpus sanum*, whereas there is no more splendid specimen of health and vigour than the ordinary British officer, who denies himself none of the good things that come in his way, who eats heartily, and drinks like a gentleman.

I used to enjoy a visit to my doctor

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because I could roll out my grievances and talk about myself to my heart's content. He had to listen, he was paid to do it, and I always felt better for that; but it pandered to a morbid desire, and, as I never derived, nor indeed relied on, any other advantage, I foreswore the indulgence.

A person who talks too much about food is as bad a bore as one who talks too much about golf or money-making; with this reservation, it is a legitimate topic. The sense of taste is given us to enjoy, and it is one that all who can afford it are wise to exercise three times a day. Any one who entirely lacks this perception is without one of the finer feelings. There is no virtue in coarse feeding, and delicacy forbids gluttony. It is very much the fashion to profess a preference for good plain cooking, but I have my doubts. When people praise their friend's cook or a restaurant, they are not thinking of chops and rice-pudding. They want a higher form of art than that, and it is over a cunning invention that they lick their lips. A nice appreciation of wine is

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nothing to be ashamed of, yet people are a little nervous about this, because it is the fashion nowadays to say that everybody drinks. There are two things which are said of every man sooner or later: that he drinks, and that he is getting fat; and it is a question which imputation is resented with the greater indignation.

XXXVII.

OF course it is no use my coming to London now; I had lost count of time. That crowded circle round Hyde Park Corner is again becoming a howling wilderness.

I have fallen foul of the rector's wife. There was a man living here who had married his wife for her money; he treated her abominably, and has drunk himself to death. We all knew him to be a blackguard, and now that he is dead they want to make a sentimental fuss. Mrs. Rector wanted me to attend a memorial service, and I refused. I

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hate wrong-headed emotion, no matter what goodness of heart inspires it. If one pays this tribute to a departed brute, what advantage is there in doing the same to the virtuous dead? Let us clear our minds of cant, and when a loveless marriage is dissolved in ignominy, don't let us be so profane as to sacrifice to divine ideals which never existed. The poor widow is quit of a dreadful incubus, and the man has ended a disgraceful life. Let us bury him in silence and sorrow, and say no more about it. When a man marries as he did, he must 'play the game.' It is not a creditable performance at best, but so long as he conducts himself decently, and is kind and attentive to his wife, nobody ought to speak ill of him. If she is happy and contented, no one else need complain; but if he batters on her money, and in return for it treats her with insult and contempt, then he is a brute whom no honest person should tolerate. I foolishly allowed myself to expound these views at the rectory, and gave great offence. I think the rector wanted to agree with me, but could

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not bring himself to contradict the person whom he admires most in the world. One should never speak the plain truth to a woman whom one does not know intimately; convention requires platitude and cant on these occasions. It is only amongst men that one can say frankly what one thinks and means. Meanwhile I have the uncomfortable feeling that I have wounded this lady's susceptibilities, that I have presented myself in an unamiable light, and that I have introduced an element of discord and uncharitableness where there was a disposition towards kindness and peace. No wonder I am unpopular if it is my habit to assert my own opinions instead of adapting them to those in common use.

I am busy at present with the proofs of my book. It is a form of work which I detest; there is none of the charm and excitement of composition, none of the fearful satisfaction of publicity. The former is almost unqualified pleasure; the latter is the medley of hopes and fears, aspiration and disappoint-

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ment, that gives its zest to any striving that a man may undertake with fortitude and resolution. But this intermediate state is irritating; it stimulates anxiety rather than confidence, and puts a heavy test upon one's patience. In the analogy of birth I think this must correspond with a woman's hour of travail.

In the intervals of my time I have been looking through my diaries and touching them up. I am glad I kept them. I have seen enough of people and events to give them a flavour of interest, and I think that they would convey a tolerably good idea of my generation to any one who might choose to look at them a century hence. My theory of diarising is to write a letter to myself, intended primarily to interest me, but open to inspection by other people. I don't think a diarist need confine himself to affairs of which the public can have no cognisance. It is a convenience to most people to have some means of refreshing their memories concerning matters which were once common knowledge, and

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which are quickly forgotten or obscured. And I doubt if any record can be entirely faithful. Very few people can describe or relate a scene with absolute accuracy : slips of memory, unconscious prejudice, insufficient acquaintance with the actors, imperfect hearing ; all these contingencies tend to discredit authority. I find myself recording an amazing display of ignorance by old Lord Norwich, whom I overheard inquiring who was Wagner, and pronouncing his name as if he drove a waggon. By happy chance I learnt afterwards from some one who was with me that the speaker had been a provincial M.P. Meanwhile this might have been read years hence as the evidence of an ear-witness, and accepted as history.

I grow daily more ashamed of my own superlative ignorance. I am angry rather than consoled when I see in my neighbours a depravity worse than mine. For example, Mr. Willett was telling us the other day of his experiences of Paris and the revolutionary societies in 1870. Mrs. Udney, catching the

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words Paris and revolution, asked, with animation, whether he had met Robespierre. He explained as civilly as possible that Robespierre had figured in the Great Revolution, upon which the young blood in attendance was pleased to inquire when that was. To me it is as offensive to see such an exhibition of mental nakedness in polite society as any other gross violation of decency would be. There was more excuse for the provincial M.P.: he made no pretence to polish, whereas the others represent the elect of polite society.

I have not fixed my day of departure. Harry wants to come here for his wedding, and bring his best man. It is a curious reflection on my character, by the way, that nobody has ever asked me to be his best man. Harry doesn't, but he wants to use my house. This upsets all my arrangements, but it can't be helped. His affairs seem to be running smoothly enough. His ideas of domestic economy and hers may not coincide; their habits have been widely dissimilar, but, unless I am mistaken, she has character enough to curb

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his extravagant tendencies. They won't be rich; he will have to exercise a little self-denial. I hope he won't find it painful, and make a grievance of it. Don't think I am croaking and condemning them to a quarrelsome existence. I am sure she will make him a good wife, and that he will take colour from her. In an ill-assorted marriage, however, I believe that salvation lies only in money. It is the hourly trifles, not the occasional crisis, that constitute the misery in those cases, and the hourly trifles can be obviated to a great extent when individual tastes can be indulged and separate humours accommodated by a lavish supply of what Dizzy calls the necessary luxuries of life. Two people who dislike one another can keep up a decent appearance if they can afford to go their respective ways in selfish enjoyment of what they like; but if they have a narrow domicile, a slatternly servant, a dubious tablecloth, no resources, and no means of seeking diversions, their doom is more terrible than they deserve for having mistaken a passing fancy for a sublime

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affinity. Harry has had so many of the former that it is to be hoped that he can recognise the symptoms of the latter.

XXXVIII.

HERE I am in military disguise, and contented as I always am in camp. We have had one unpleasant episode. A youth has joined us who wants breaking in. Of course I don't see much of the boys, but I caught him at mess airing his very bad French for the purpose of ridiculing our dear old head-waiter, who is a kind of father of the regiment. I always dislike to hear people talking French before servants. I should not like it if they used a foreign language to discuss me; and, after all, servants are human beings, although some women treat them as if they were not. One expects the utmost courtesy from them, and the least one can do is to show them decent consideration in return. It betrays bad breeding, or lack of right feeling, to

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behave as if they were machines, a good deal 'lower than your horse.' I stopped the boy and told him to talk English. I am afraid this encouraged the rest of them to take him in hand, and they proceeded to make havoc with his tent and carry out the traditional programme of what is known as 'ragging.' It is not a good system. No one above the age of a schoolboy can submit to this kind of thing without loss of self-respect: the men know of it, and the victim loses all prestige as an officer. It is never amusing, and can only appeal to a bully. Yet with a conceited and coarse young man like this, gentler methods have little effect. The only alternative is to boycott, and that is not what you want in a happy family. He did not take it well, and is sulking now. We must take care that these seditious spirits don't persecute him. If he has any good in him he will learn manners and improve; if not, he will probably leave in disgust.

It is a revelation to find how little human understanding these militiamen possess. Their

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vocabulary is so scanty that one has to choose one's words in talking to them as carefully as if they were foreigners or children. Some of them really cannot understand, some cannot remember at all. They have no power of observation, and almost none of expression. To send a message and expect an answer is like setting an ordinary boy to decipher a Chinese inscription. Words to them create mystery instead of imparting apprehension. I read lately of some answers given by children about the use of alcohol. One wrote, 'It biteth like a servant and stingeth like a hatter;' another, that 'Seafaring men who are in the habit of drinking are liable to collide with other vessels.' Here you have confusion of words and difficulty of expression in perfection, and this is how our warriors think and talk. If they are trained long enough they become excellent food for powder, but I can't help feeling that our fellows, for all the progress they make in one short training, are, after all, military *hors d'œuvres* of the lightest. One of my men said he was ill the

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other day. I asked him what was the matter, and he said he felt a little pale. But our best duffer was a young soldier on sentry for the first time. The orderly officer took great pains to explain his duties, and tried to find out if he understood them. Nothing was to be extracted beyond a vacant grin, until the officer asked in despair, 'What would you do if you saw the camp was on fire?' One distinct idea suddenly flashed across his memory: 'I'd present arms and say, All's well.' You will gather from this that it is not easy to follow our instructions and encourage individual intelligence and independent action.

We hear a great deal about the lack of patriotism in this country. I don't see what encouragement it has. We are not brought up to contemplate the possibility of invasion. Soldiering, no matter how rudimentary, is arduous work; for many young men it entails loss of employment, which passes into less patriotic hands while they are in camp. Meanwhile a music-hall is obviously more attractive than a drill-hall, and you may be sure that

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the young women of England will encourage their swains to give preference to the former. These ladies have a good deal to answer for, but that they will ever take a serious or sensible view of the matter is, I suppose, beyond hope. Meanwhile every one praises the voluntary system—provided the volunteering is done by somebody else.

I have been pondering over your strictures on my habit of seeing the bad side of life instead of the good. I don't think my depravity is as great as you describe it. I don't deny that I have a morbid nature; certain events have tended to aggravate the disease, and perhaps I have given way instead of resisting. I seem to be full of some black colour (literally melancholy), which inclines to increase with age. People, I believe, are born happy and unhappy as they are born tall and short, or thin and fat. The last-named may evade their destiny by continual effort and self-denial, but it requires great courage and heroic perseverance. Perhaps the same may be said of those who are melancholy.

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Depend upon it there is no such thing as a *malade imaginaire*. Nobody is miserable for the fun of the thing; and if a person pleads illness, without any definite malady, he or she is suffering from some nervous derangement of this kind.

I don't think I criticise people unduly: when I see faults perhaps I am too ready to name them: when I meet qualities which are positively evil, I don't hesitate to denounce them. Why should I? I may declare that every one is charming and admirable: if so, I condone mischievous traits of character, and my praise is no certificate of virtue. It is principally on account of his natural malice that I dislike Oswald Grove, for example. But he deliberately vilifies what most of us approve, and will allow merit to no man. He seems to have no instinct for friendship and no desire for friends. Truly I have both. Nobody ever set greater store by friends and friendship than I used to do. Through misfortune or misconduct I suffered the loss of these, but I mourn for them in sackcloth and

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ashes. You can't charge me with indifference to the friendship which you bestow on me. As far as I can recollect, the only person about whom I have spoken to you with undue severity is Miss Selby. I own I made too much of her little affectations, which were harmless; but I am not ashamed of denouncing her father's false pride, or her brother's rudeness, or her cousin's blatant vulgarity. I never disguised my horror of 'the gang': in my opinion they exhibit most unlovable qualities; their lives are thoroughly artificial, their pursuits and ambitions purely selfish; and they are conspicuous by reason of their want of consideration for the feelings of all persons outside their limited circle. I don't think I have been hard upon old Harry, despite his vagaries; and my only other recent acquaintances, the Darbyshires and the rector, I have praised to you. All my companions here I like, except one officer, who thinks like an idiot and talks like a bargee; and the cub ci-dessus. It is worth remarking that both these young men are scions of prominent

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families in the county ; the former was debased by a brutal parent who bullied and degraded him ; the latter by an over-fastidious one who pampered and spoilt him. I wish I was a very rich man with several sons : I should like to experiment on them with various methods of education and upbringing according to their several temperaments. In order to bring out of boys all their latent capacity, different treatments are surely necessary, since character and ability are variable enough, and often entirely dissimilar, even in twin brothers ; yet every boy is submitted to one stereotyped ordeal, and left in the end to educate himself or remain uneducated according to his fancy.

However that may be, these two comrades of mine have been grievously mishandled. For the others I can have nothing but a generous inclination. They don't pretend to genius or personal distinction : they represent the English gentleman taken on an average. We dine together every night, after associating all day, and we don't get bored. For one thing, we are leading vigorous, wholesome lives, and

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our minds are not jaded : for another, diverse interests and tastes are represented ; we do not all live in the same social area, consequently our conversation cannot run only after people. Sport, travel, agriculture, law, theatres, books, commerce, politics, even religion, come up for discussion. Some of us are interested in each of these, and I have listened to better talk at our mess than at many a dinner-table with higher pretensions to gifted company. We have one philosophical officer who is never at a loss for a metaphysical problem, and is a sure resource if other streams of debate run dry. A very courteous officer used to think it his duty to make conversation to his neighbour, who might be silent and listening, and with the most humane intentions did much disservice to our harmony ; but we have corrected him with certain brutal frankness, and our evenings are all the merrier.

The day is so fully occupied that one has little spare time : one always makes some occupation for the afternoon, and there remains only an hour or so before dinner. On occasions

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of this kind I love to have a novel on hand : one is sufficiently tired to appreciate the sense of being entertained without demand upon one's energies. I am re-reading *Esmond* and *The Virginians* ; my favourite recreation. *The Newcomes* is a magnificent work of art, but I don't care so much for *Pendennis* ; the author is talking to himself more than he should. *The Newcomes* is a representation of humanity to which one can return as one does to a great picture, where the more one studies, the more one perceives the symbols and effects in composition apart from the obvious attractions of line and colour. It is remarkable that this writer understood his neighbours so intimately that we recognise his characters now amongst our own acquaintance. He saw certain aspects of human nature which are immutable and which recur continually : consequently the figures which he drew are those which we daily see in motion around us. Dickens, on the other hand, draws attention to terrestrial infirmities or virtues by elaborate caricature. Nobody ever saw a Micawber, or a Mark

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Tapley, or a Pecksniff, or Sam Weller (more's the pity) in real life, and yet we quote them as if they were types and models of our fellow-creatures. Undoubtedly the pleasantest moments of life are spent alone with a book. If one is found reading in a country house, it is taken as a sign that one is bored. Often have I been interrupted in such moments of deep content and invited to go and look at a motor or a cow, or something else that I did not want to see. Likewise, if one sets off for a long walk alone it is regarded as unsociable, and an implied reproach to the company. I can't see why. Personally, I prefer walking alone: apart from the fact that one's companion generally comes under protest, and without enjoyment, I agree with Hazlitt's maxim that walking and talking are two men's work. A walk of three hours ought to induce a pleasant sense of fatigue: add to this the effort of three hours' talking, and exhaustion follows. I like to talk sitting down, and to walk in silence. The dining-room is the proper place for talk, and the evening is the sacred hour. As

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matters are, four people may break up a party and retire to bridge and silence without a challenge; yet any one who retreats upon his favourite resource during the day is put to shame. It would be a heinous offence to sit down to a novel in the drawing-room directly after dinner. It appears to me that cards are equally anti-social. Good talk, the highest social accomplishment and delight, is an attainment never attempted and seldom recognised. After all, if bridge is permissible, why not patience? Yet I don't suppose it would be considered less rude to isolate oneself for this purpose than for reading.

The only complaints of weariness here arise in respect to our food. One likes variety in eating as one does in occupation and locality: our modest cook has no range of production. As you know, I am not an artist in cookery; some of us are more critical, but all are too healthy to be fastidious. Appetites seem to me to diminish every year: certainly our capacity is very much smaller than our grandfathers', judging by the records

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of banquets which one sees and the stories which one reads. There is great waste, of course: dining in polite society, one may be sure of half-a-dozen courses: convention demands them. But no man at a club ever thinks of ordering more than two or three. If any one were served there as he had been the night before, and expected to be the night following, in society, he would be looked upon as a glutton or a lunatic. It is the display which constitutes the luxury of life, not the actual indulgence. A greedy man is rare nowadays, though it is rather the fashion to be a connoisseur; gourmets are many and gourmands few. Personally I should be happy with a diet of bread and wine, like Sidonia in *Coningsby*, always provided that the latter was the genuine French article and the former a faithful imitation. The nastiest things I have ever tasted are British beer and spirits and English baker's bread. Talking of *Coningsby*, are you aware that the only references to the sacred primrose in the novels are in this book, where poached eggs are brought in 'hissing

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in the dish like tufts of primroses,' and in *Lothair*, where Lord St. Jerome says that primroses make an excellent salad?

XXXIX.

You may have observed that a communicative fit frequently seizes me on a Sunday. Here it is again. I suppose a sermon induces a moralising or an argumentative mood. To-day's performance does both; with a touch of humour in it. We had the chaplain from the convict prison to preach to-day. With reprehensible carelessness he put into his pocket what was intended for home consumption; and dashing at his task, he had declared that those whom he addressed were evil-doers, for whose benefit the gospel of salvation was especially designed, before he could pull up. The congregation were not as much astonished as you might suppose, because it is the habit of military clergy to point their sermons with the moral that young soldiers have a natural tendency to

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vice, and that their careers are beset by special temptations. It is pathetic to watch these harmless rustics and artisans gaping at the catalogue of sin to which they are apparently subscribers without knowing it. I believe that most of them are thoroughly honest boys: they certainly give no trouble requiring these solemn adjurations.

I am glad that you accept the apologia in my last letter. I think that as I grow older I become more indulgent of little weaknesses and less tolerant of deliberate and aggressive offences. The first quality to be desired in man or woman is kindness; it regulates the rest. To give pleasure whenever you can; to avoid giving pain at any time; these precepts are the basis of conduct, and a faithful observance of them will cover a multitude of frailties. The essence of true nobility is neglect of self, says Froude: you may call it consideration for others, and not insist too much on heroic self-denial. I once read of an old village woman who made the shrewd remark that 'true gentlefolks never suspects

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themselves : ' they are not careful of appearances, it does not occur to them to mistrust their instinct for doing and saying the right thing : it comes automatically. Here is an attempt to define a gentleman :—

‘ A soul incapable of fear,
Unselfish, modest, and sincere ;
Of stainless honour, undefiled
In speech and action as a child ;
Observe these precepts if you can,
And you shall be a gentleman.’

When a man begins to consider whether he is acquitting himself as a gentleman would and should, he will probably discover that he is not : *Nascitur non fit*. And this is true also of a woman : the word gentleman is the best available, and entirely suitable as a standard of excellence for her also. Any one can be a lady who is rich enough ; by no means can she be a gentleman by right of purchase, and many who are born to be ladies are not brought up to be gentlemen. Selfishness, arrogance, insincerity, fickleness, evil speaking

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and low thinking defile many a temple where man should be led to worship. Do you remember Coventry Patmore's lines?—

Ah, wasteful woman!—she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man cannot choose but pay—
How has she cheapened Paradise!
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoiled the bread and spilled the wine,
Which, spent with due respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine!

I feel inclined to observe, with those irritating idiots who scribble on the margin of library books, 'How true!' I never can understand the motive of these commentators, by the way. A footnote by the author is sufficiently disturbing; these imbecile criticisms make a book unreadable. It is a thoroughly insane vanity, because they have not the satisfaction which the chatterer and the newspaper correspondent find in obtruding themselves *in propria persona*.

Reverting for a moment to women. Long

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ago did I cease to dogmatize on this subject, and vain is it to attempt to classify them: *quot feminae tot sententiæ* is my faith. I believe that women vary as widely as do the blossoms of the mimosa-tree: but if they have any common characteristics they are jealousy, hatred of cruelty, and inability to listen. No man ever shows the blazing indignation of a woman at the spectacle of a man illtreating his horse (the women fiends I take to be insane, and therefore outside my argument): it is with great difficulty that a woman can be induced to listen to the end of a sentence: and they are jealous of their sex in general as a man is not jealous. A man is jealous of an individual who is thwarting him in ambition or love; but he does not trouble himself about the rest of his neighbours, who are better-looking, or more accomplished, or more popular than he is. He does not always want to be *primus inter pares*: a woman does. She is unhappy if others in the room are better dressed, or receive more attention: are, in fact, more successful. I am sure that their

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natural instinct is to be unselfish, and they are capable of splendid sacrifice upon occasion ; but their upbringing and social mission compels them to be constantly watching their own progress, and to this I attribute the blemish which disfigures so many amiable characters. You may, if you like, call it a form of altruism ; her desire is to please, whereas a man's object is to seek pleasure and to ensue it. But I am afraid it is not entirely for the benefit of others that she wishes to excel. Women ought to be studied like the weather ; both afford a lifelong interest to careful observers ; but whereas men examine the latter with scientific exactness, and then come to erroneous conclusions, they make reckless assumptions about the former, and consider themselves uncommonly knowing. However, the vagaries of both will make them popular topics of conversation to the end of time, and any one who will venture a confident prediction about either may safely be written down an ass.

There is rather a nice line in the stage version of *Man and Wife*. When the runa-

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way young lady tells the respectable man that he must surely despise her, he replies, 'Can any man who remembers his mother despise women?' Those of us who have been truly blessed in a perfect mother ought to take off our hats and stand in reverent silence when her sex is named. But perhaps it is against the desecration of that sacred memory that one protests when one sees all the foolish and unworthy things which women do. 'Ah, wasteful women!' I think a man's craving for woman's sympathy is as great as a woman's need for man's love is said to be. Perhaps a man demands, whilst a woman only asks to bestow. A man may become a misogynist because some woman has hurt him, or because he is over-exacting and incapable of forbearance; but no man, unless he be a brute, can sincerely hate all women, or, remembering his mother, despise them.

I rather hate the females who attend our band-playings on Sunday afternoons: they are very ugly and badly dressed, and make a great deal of noise: but I don't despise them.

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They afford a representation of love in their gambols with our Tommies about as noble as that of war, which the latter gentlemen exhibit. It is a caricature of Venus and Mars, but a wise man sees things in their right proportions, and puts up with geese when he can't have swans.

I have sometimes wondered whether these maidens would care to jilt their swains if they saw a chance of ensnaring our officers. I believe not. It is damaging to our vanity, but I have always maintained that human nature does not aspire to what is out of reach, and for them the attentions of a ruddy private are sufficient. I don't imagine the slightest reservation in favour of our colonel, or the most elegant of our subalterns. I am elderly and stupid and rather badly sun-scorched, so that I should have no chance in any case.

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XL.

My visit to you was wholly beneficial. I enjoyed it from start to finish, and left with a great pang of regret. The spirit of your house, with your gracious inspiration, warmed the genial current of my soul. It did me good in many ways, and I thank you again and again.

I was obliged to come back to my cottage. Harry was bent on lodging here on the eve of his marriage, and when I explained that my lease was out he said he thought I might 'stand by a pal' at such a time, instead of leaving him in the lurch. Here, at all events, I could boast of a friend; so I got an extension of time, nor does time in this instance belie its synonym with money! Accommodation has to be found for his best man, namely, Bracknell. Harry intimated that he was rather a particular fellow, and might find my only spare bedroom rather small. This meant that I was to surrender my own room; but here I struck, and pretended not to understand. Harry seems to have made several dear

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friends in the neighbourhood, and insists on a dinner as the customary farewell to his bachelor days. I wanted to include the rector, but he says he does not know him well enough. It is his dinner, so I suppose he must have his way. I wanted to go away and leave him in possession, but he said he was too busy to attend to things, and I must see him through. Well, he shan't call me inhospitable if I can help it.

The Selby family have gone to Dinard. They are best away at such a time, though I wish the good man had not insisted on his favourite resort. It will have painful associations for the daughter, I am afraid. I have been told that women enjoy hugging their griefs in this way, and she may have a morbid preference for the place. If her case were mine, not all the boats in the Channel would get me there. But then I have no parents to consider and obey.

As the publication of my book draws near, my nervousness increases. I wake up in the night suddenly conscious of a clumsy phrase

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or an inappropriate word, fretting over what can't now be amended. I feel already that I might have made it much better. This may be because in the interval I have been reading good stuff. Not that it would have improved matters if I had tried to ape any other style or styles. That would have added a fault. One can but be natural. To write carefully and write one's best is the only way ; if one cannot succeed as oneself, no hope lies in masquerading in borrowed plumes. Nobody who has not earnestly desired and striven to write well can form an idea of the infinite possibilities, the excellence unattainable. One sentence, almost one word, may give merit to an entire book, as the single comment 'majestic' immortalised the cockney whom Coleridge met on his travels. Beautiful style is like a beautiful voice ; it can be perfected with care, but it cannot be acquired by any amount of training. We inarticulate mortals seldom appreciate the value of words. Mr. Marion Crawford has a very clever passage in his book, *With the Immortals*. Heine describes

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the persecution and death of a ragged beggar with such art as to reduce his audience to tears. Then he asks, 'Do you think it is the fact, or the way the fact is told, which brings tears to your eyes? If I had stated the fact thus: An old beggar died in a snowstorm; shortly before he died, a little boy hit him with a stone—I say, if I put the thing in its simplest expression, would you feel as deep a sympathy? I believe not.' Of course not; and yet, until they were told of it, I doubt whether they were aware of the difference—that they were being played upon by a musician, not shouted at by a newsvender. In that wonderful legend, the Book of Job, we are told that 'the ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat.' One certainly becomes fastidious and keenly appreciative; one is made susceptible to every delicate flavour and every cunning touch, and, like a true epicure, one renders homage to the artist. To show you what I mean: let us take the Trial Scene in *Pickwick*, where the reluctant chemist is sworn as a juryman, protesting that his errand-boy,

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whom he has left in charge, doesn't know the difference between Epsom salts and oxalic acid. Here is his final warning: 'Very well, my lord, then there'll be murder before this trial's over, that's all.' And now Macbeth's foreboding of doom:—

'Ere the bat hath flown
His cloistered flight; ere, to black Hecate's
summons,
The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath wrung night's yawning peal, there shall
be done
A deed of dreadful note.'

Eliminating the words Hecate and shard-borne, there are none here that might not have been used by the chemist; yet see how sublime tragedy and broadest farce are constructed out of the same material by right selection and manipulation. Possibly this applies even more closely to poetry, where form requires a nicer economy; but my present business is with prose. It is obvious that we must all be self-taught, and so, to some ex-

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tent, original. Grammar finds no place in our system of education. Our speech is so slovenly that any one who tries to talk properly is a prig. Such correspondence as we still conduct without the aid of telegrams and telephones is so rude and bare that expression, phrasing, and punctuation take their miserable chance, and any one who tries to write gracefully or even correctly is a pedant. Which reminds me that Elihu, in the Book of Job, must have been the father of all prigs and bores. He may be a spurious character interpolated into the text ; if so, it seems as if they understood construction in those days, and knew the value of comic element. What a part for a good comedian !

As for words : when I was in Parliament, a constituent once proposed my health in these luminous phrases : ‘ I can say it goes without saying that no one need say anything about our Member. Any one would say that—I need not say any more : I have said all there is to say.’ Who shall dare to assert now that the English language is not easy to manage and fertile in resource ? Without aspiring to

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elegance or power, it is difficult enough to write a page in which a critic cannot detect a solecism. It is true, one can generally counter with a parallel use by some recognised authority; but the fact remains that one has not chosen deliberately, and one can only plead not guilty because the great authors themselves occasionally nodded. Custom has sanctioned a number of practices which cannot be justified by rule. It seems easy enough to write like De Quincey, but it is not. Perhaps his art lies in this, that all he wrote is so simple and natural that one feels that it must have been done like that, and in no other way. Every bon-mot, likewise, seems so obvious that one feels that one might have said it oneself: somehow, one didn't; and pure English, without affectation or artifice, seems so ready to hand that one can surely reproduce it: somehow, one doesn't. Ruskin uses words like colours, and we can't all be colourists. Macaulay poured them out in sparkling torrents, and we can't all be fountains. Gladstone rolled them out like hot lava, and we can't all be volcanoes. Carlyle

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bullied them into unexpected shapes, and we can't all be masters of contortion. Dizzy hung them about him like Roman lights, and we can't all be pyrotechnists. Sheridan, for that matter, wove them into charms, but we can't all be magicians. To choose the right words, and put them in the right places, is a reasonable ambition. To find rare words, and put them to startling uses, is to sin against the light.

After all, the printer and the reporter can play you nasty tricks. Leigh Hunt once wrote that he liked coffee because it reminded him of the *Arabian Nights*, though not mentioned there, 'as smoking does for the same reason.' This appeared 'as sucking does for the snow season,' which the author left as it stood, to be the wonder and confusion of his commentators and admirers. An orator once declared that he had always been an optimist, and will be known to posterity on his own confession as having been an oculist all his life.

A misplaced stop can do wonders. A distinguished statesman recently declared in a speech that he had never alluded to Ireland in

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1885 without saying that he was opposed to Home Rule. This was the report in the papers the next day: 'The noble lord said that he had never alluded to Ireland in 1885. Without saying that he was opposed to Home Rule, . . .' which was the direct reverse of his meaning.

Words of course change their application. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Mr. Chuckster addresses Kit as 'young snob,' and in *Martin Chuzzlewit* young Bailey enjoins Poll Sweedlepipe not to look at his buttons, 'if he ain't a judge, because these lions' heads was made for men of taste, not snobs.' I have on a former occasion troubled you with a dissertation on snobs, but I don't think that anybody nowadays would include this species in the category as we arrange it. This was certainly not Thackeray's interpretation. Something of it remains in the title 'cad' which Eton boys confer on all the natives of the town and country who do not rejoice in the same social eminence as their noble selves. I have heard half-educated people speak of captivated for

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capitulated; heart-rendering for heart-rendering, and intrepidity for intrepidity or audacity. I myself have occasionally had to use a dictionary in reading English works of a philosophical or metaphysical complexion. I knew a man in public life who thought that misled was the past tense of a verb 'misle,' rhyming with reprisal, and signifying to deceive; and another conspicuous individual who did not know the difference between melancholia and megalomania. If I were a statistician, I should like to try and ascertain how many words people of various classes know and use. Imagine the narrowness of life in a labourer's cottage: what is the range of his acquaintance: what has he to think and talk about: what is his capacity for expression? In a country villa you may find much culture or none; but here again the range of life must be limited. It is likely to be intimate indeed, and that is why marriages in such society are usually more judicious and successful than in the superficial and shifting existence familiar to us. I wonder whether our acquaintances are numbered by

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thousands or only hundreds, and whether we should find the total of those whom we know to speak to much larger or much smaller than we suppose. Certainly the more one lives in the world the quicker is the brain's action, though not necessarily the richer its store. One learns an enormous number of useless things, but they enliven existence. For solid knowledge I believe you must go to the ranks of the unrecognised. It is remarkable how much erudition is displayed by people who write to the papers, of whom one has never heard nor is likely to hear, and whose addresses would give Belgravia cold shudders.

My examination might include an average of the words familiar to children at progressive ages: it is interesting to hear them asking the meaning of what they don't understand. I recollect asking as a child what the word 'extraordinary' implied, otherwise my vocabulary grew unperceived by me; and so I suppose it must and does with everybody. A truly amazing fact is that exemplary women, old and young, in delirium or insanity become

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blasphemous and disgusting, whereas a coarse man of low moral standard does not. Whence came the possession in the former case, and whither is gone the habit in the latter? Presumably the condition is abnormal in both; phrases and suggestions accidentally overheard are latent in the woman's mind, and the man's spirit has gone out of him. From the emptiness of the heart the mouth speaketh: the customary thoughts have fled, and up from the void comes the buried remnant.

Harry, meanwhile, is extending his researches into the marriage service. He is resolved not to be caught napping, and certainly won't commit himself lightly and unadvisedly. He says it is a 'rum performance'; it appears to confront him with the combined terrors of a *viva-voce* examination and a difficult part in private theatricals. He lost no time in divulging some of his suspicions to Bracknell, who has just arrived. This noble lord is a seasoned best man in whom familiarity has bred contempt: 'Oh, that's all right,' he said. 'You need not shy at the ceremony:

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all the mischief is done once you are engaged ; nothing you say in church will do you any harm.' This seemed to give satisfaction, though it was not very beautifully expressed. My servants seem to enjoy the prospect most. William intends to deck us all like cart-horses on May Day, and the cook, I know, would like to have the marriage feasting here. In default of this she is cooking her hardest now, and is wasting my substance on some startling productions. In fact, we are all making ourselves rather ridiculous according to our respective tastes and temperaments, and I shall be secretly grateful when the chapter is finished. We are all fidgety, and but for Bracknell's unromantic tone, we might easily become hysterical. I never bargained for this invasion when I occupied my humble retreat. I think I am the sort of man who always carries an umbrella from force of habit and self-preservation, and is invariably called upon to give it up to some less cautious and methodical person when emergency arises and rain begins to fall.

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XLI.

EMERSON—again the philosopher, not my friend—says that the best antidotes to selfishness are solitude, books, and travel. I ought to be on the way to a heavenly condition of altruism. Here I am travelling alone with nothing but books for company. Ruskin made some very fine and acceptable observations in *Sesame and Lilies* on the sublime company to which any man may have access if he will read. I confess I wish for something alive and moving at times. At home in the country I don't feel this to the same extent: here I can entertain myself well enough through the morning and the afternoon, but I detest sitting at my food in silence. Dining alone in a foreign hotel is almost more depressing than dining in a London club. My present plight reminds me painfully of my lonely state. Other men travel with their friends: well—it is foolish to lament. Nobody wants to travel with me; I could not force them if I would, nor would I if I could. The leopard cannot

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change his spots, nor I my nature. There I am, to be left or taken, and if mankind elects to leave me, I must be content to live alone like the widowed turtle. But I should like some one to dine with. Bacon says of friendship that whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god. I wish neither to feed like the one nor eat apart like the other.

I had as miserable a journey as I always do. I could revile those 'dratted' boats as Mrs. Gamp railed against the Ankworth's package. Thence ensuing came the night in the train. If one were shown into a bedroom no larger than a dog-kennel in a country house, one would feel sufficiently indignant; if one were called upon to share it with three other men, possibly objectionable, one would feel that an outrage was being perpetrated, yet on a journey one not only courts this discomfort, but accepts it as a luxury, and pays an exorbitant surcharge.

It is one of our most popular myths that travel is delightful for its own sake, also that it is good for the health. I deny both pro-

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positions. Every excursion out of England brings me two attacks of sea-sickness, than which there are few ordeals more unpleasant and degrading. A long train journey, especially if it be by night, involves discomfort and disorder, not so flagrant and obtrusive, but no less prejudicial to health. Constant change of quarters, with strange faces and places, keeps me in a state of nervous unrest and abnormal condition of body. All this I know to be the penalty I pay for the privilege of seeing the world, and this privilege I take to be one of the most precious appertaining to those who have money to spend. To quote Bacon again: 'Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience.' In the experience lies the pleasure: in the education the use. He goes on to the obvious reflection that it is impossible to travel to advantage without a knowledge of languages, and, indeed, lays down certain stipulations, failing which, travel should not be attempted. This is a counsel of perfection, and would restrict most of us to our

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island for the term of our natural lives. But assuming that we lose all the benefits which he contemplates, a superficial acquaintance with foreign countries is better than none, and is more informing to the mind than the reading of many books; and experience is a perpetual joy. Dr. Johnson says that 'Of the present state, whatever it be, we feel, and are forced to confess, the misery; yet when the same state is again at a distance, imagination paints it as desirable.' Channel passages, night trains, early morning arrivals, harassed departures, thwarted plans, foul weather, disputed hotel bills—all these fade into obscurity. The cities and plains, the galleries and museums, the customs and costumes, the people and the panorama of life, all these abide with us and keep our minds well furnished.

I had three train-mates. One, a very old man, who looked as if he ought to be prepared to embark with Charon, rather than on a continental voyage; another, a cheerful and attractive young officer. The third, a tiresome man with false cuffs and shirt-front, who made odd

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noises. He was aggressively talkative in the early morning—a time and situation in which one does not feel in a sociable mood. His chatter was so exasperating that I was on the verge of trying to closure him with a savage snub when he volunteered the information that he was an ardent supporter of hospitals, and had just given a thousand pounds to one upon being elected to the Board. I am on it, and we are to be colleagues. I had missed one or two meetings lately, and did not know this. Apparently he has made a large fortune, and is doubtless an exemplary Christian: but he is a frightful bore. The moral of this is that it is not only wrong, but impolitic, to be rude to strangers. I might have laid up for myself a lasting series of awkward meetings in our Board-room.

The old man was worth watching: he was as much at home in the cabin as if it were his own bedroom. He was leisurely in his movements, and the quietest traveller I ever saw: a born vagrant, I suppose. He must have been past eighty, and seemed so frail that any

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ailment would surely be fatal. I wonder whether he recognises this: also whether the contemplation of death ever enters his mind. Do old people think much of death, and do they dread it? One seldom sees evidence of this. I have known young and healthy persons beset with terrors of death and eternal punishment under pressure of a religious craze. And I have known old men and women who were tired out, and ready to die; but I never saw that they were afraid. I imagine that this old boy is serenely indifferent: perhaps it would be all one to him if he passed away in a foreign hotel. It would be a new and extraordinary journey to take: nothing more alarming than that. It may be assumed that nobody awaits the process of dissolution with entire composure. At the last one may feel nervous, as one does at one's first ball, one's first appearance in public, or at one's wedding: but that need not imply reluctance to face the ordeal:

‘Death’s laying on of hands I dread,
But have no fear of being dead.’

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I think that is a normal and natural frame of mind for all but sinners and cowards of the more pronounced type.

The soldier was a man after my own heart ; rather helpless, but undismayed. If he were to lose his luggage or his train it would not disturb him much ; he would never lose his head. I have no doubt he would prepare to lose his life with equal self-possession in the day of battle. He was good-looking and scrupulously tidy, and addressed all the officials in colloquial English with easy assurance and great friendliness. He spent a good deal of time puzzling over his tickets, which seemed confused, and whistling gently.

I wish I were a soldier. I think an author leads the life most to be desired ; a diplomat the most interesting ; a missionary to the poor the most admirable ; a soldier the most romantic. Even in peace, garrison duty, though it grows monotonous, has a certain glamour. The red light of war is always latent, and when that is ablaze the soldier's path is so close beset with peril and hardship that to

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acquit him like a man he needs the virtues of a god. Consequently one may always look on him as a potential hero. At all events, if it be pleasant to have the admiration of women, that is his admitted privilege. Women have inherited the savage veneration of valour, and compounded with it a civilised horror of fighting. They respect soldiers, admire courage, and hate a coward; but they hate war with greater fervour, and when it comes, their inclination is to push forward their beloved with one hand and pluck him back with the other, which produces a sad state of indecision.

It is an odd caste distinction that the men of the navy and army are never allowed to appear out of uniform, whereas officers are only expected to wear theirs for a few hours each day. No officer dare present himself in society or a club before he has laid aside his professional attire: such is the custom of the country. The plea of discomfort is not valid; nothing is more convenient than the serge dress. A clergyman does not take off his black

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garments and white tie as soon as he leaves church, and a wretched bishop is obliged to wear his apron and gaiters and his ridiculous hat in all scenes and temperatures. Judges don't dine out in wigs and robes, nor the Speaker in his knee-breeches. Ecclesiastics only are required to maintain the dignity of their office by constant singularity of attire, and share with stablemen an obligation to shave the upper lip.

I told you that Harry had a brief impulse towards a foreign honeymoon, in which I was to play an unusual part. The bride was willing enough, and if it had been a matter of killing time, I think it might really have come to pass; but the business of killing partridges was imminent and more important, and the original project was allowed to stand. I have not heard from them since the wedding; indeed, it would hardly have been possible. I left next day, and have rested not day or night meanwhile.

This hotel is new since I was here before. It is clean and spacious, and smothered with

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ornamentation like a Christmas-tree. After lunch to-day a child, studying a number of brilliant excrescences on the wall, inquired, 'What are those for?' The parent, who seemed to be a matter-of-fact man, muttered, 'They are supposed to be decorations,' which was as searching a criticism as one could hear. They are certainly not beautiful, and they serve no purpose in directing or diverting the eye. They just fill space. But a worse fault than these ugly things is the supply of pianos. Every sitting-room appears to have one, and every room near me to be a sitting-room. I cannot comprehend the hard-hearted selfishness of those mortals who strum and flounder through pieces regardless of the torture inflicted on defenceless neighbours. Presumably they have some appreciation of sound, and cannot be ignorant of the harm they do. No piano ought to be allowed except in private houses. My experience is that in private houses nobody touches them, whereas, if you live in a flat or stay in a hotel, there is sure to be some one above you or

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below you or next door who plays at most unreasonable hours, or practises, as the phrase is, when you are most intent on reading or writing. They never know more than half-a-dozen tunes, and it is enough to make you scream with rage when suddenly one of the hated things breaks your silence. I believe there is a society for the prevention of street noises: if they would include hotels and flats in the scope of their endeavours, I would gladly become a subscriber.

I bless the writers of novels on these occasions, and my own inability to remember what I read. One can embrace an old favourite with all the delight of familiarity and freshness as one might greet an old friend in the flesh.

XLII.

THERE is one essential rule to be observed in travelling: never to pay attention to anything you are told. Your acquaintances will

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always assure you that whatever they have not done should not or cannot be done by you. I am always warned that it is impossible to go anywhere at this time of the year because it is too hot. Considerable experience teaches me that September is the best of all months, there is less bad weather and less crowd of tourists than at any other season. I prefer being warmed to being chilled, and I never find my comfort or my plans interfered with by excessive heat, as they often are by bad weather or too many travellers. At Rome, for instance, in the winter you will probably be tormented by cold, and crowded out of your favourite hotel; in September you have perfect weather, the choice of all rooms, and the services of the best guides, if you want them, all at reduced prices. Fastidious people may deprecate guides as the resource of the cockney, but to all except those who know every inch of the ground they are invaluable for saving time and avoiding the necessity for countermarching. I could not possibly have seen as much here as I have seen without the

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intelligent individual who has been my pilot ; I should have wasted a great deal of my day examining maps at street corners and puzzling over guide-books in the galleries. The objection is that possibly professionals show you too much. This morning mine provided me with more than I could digest, and I can hardly assimilate it all. I don't mind claiming to be something of a picture-lover. I don't pretend to knowledge or taste, and I am a shockingly bad observer ; but I have taken some pains to learn about painters and how to look at what they produce, which is my criterion of sincerity. Observation, let me remark, is as much a gift as a fine voice or true wit, yet people never scruple to profess their powers. Some I know who would never declare that they had beautiful voices or were extremely amusing, but think it no immodesty to aver that they are keen observers. It is singular arrogance ; I sorrowfully admit my failure.

Nothing seems to come amiss in painting. Wordsworth is blamed for drivelling over a

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celandine or a rotten tree, yet a spray of flowers or a tree-trunk can test the skill and insight of any painter. You can't produce beautiful poetry dealing with gutter-snipes, yet see what Murillo could make out of his little gamins. Heaven is a fit theme for a painter, not a poet. The Saviour has been made the subject of some of the finest pictures in existence; no one would dream of writing sonnets to Him.

I sometimes ask myself what has all this effected for the good of mankind. Europe has miles of galleries, not to be assessed in money value. Art has occupied and engages still the labour, time, and devotion of thousands of mankind. Genius and piety and high ideals are all enlisted in its service, but the poverty of the poor, the misery of the afflicted, the burden of the heavy-laden, have never received an hour's alleviation from all its noblest achievements. If all the galleries of Rome and Florence were destroyed to-morrow, the material and social welfare of Italy need not suffer appreciably, unless it

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were for the loss of money spent by visitors, half of whom lounge through the rooms now in stupid indifference. For those to whom beauty is a real delight there would not be entire darkness. I suppose it is true that an artist interprets for us what is beautiful in the world, else we should do quite as well to study the originals for ourselves. But even if we could never hope to look at a frame again, we could all proceed to travel up and down the earth and gaze out of the carriage window. Even I see sometimes an effect of form or colour which could never be reproduced and is never forgotten.

Tennyson says of the great actors that they 'made a nation purer through their art.' Beyond doubt this is true of the painters. If all the classics of art could perish, we should be without a history of the human mind in its development along the highest plane of thought and aspiration. Worship of holiness and beauty are motives which justify themselves, and we are the better for their influence.

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I am not sure that technical perception of method or style is an ennobling habit, although it is true that one admires Rembrandt's work not because his friends and acquaintances were singularly beautiful or interesting, but because he portrayed them with such marvellous insight and ingenuity. Still less admirable is the professional estimation from the auctioneer's point of view; but to be susceptible of deep impression in the contemplation of true and noble art does make for the elevation of character, and so I suppose I may follow my guide with a clear conscience.

I wish he could tell me what seems to be 'wropped in mystery,' namely, what became of draughtsmanship for some centuries. At Pompeii, for example, the men and beasts on the panels are full of spirit and movement: when figure-painting came into practice again with Cimabue and Giotto, their execution was as unlike anything alive as the earliest efforts of a Board-school pupil, no matter how lofty may have been their ideal and imagination.

I should be curious to know what effect

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pictures produce on some of my fellow-lodgers here. Last night, as I was settling down comfortably to the last chapters of *Guy Mannering*, an American paterfamilias interrupted me unashamed; he could not possibly understand that I preferred Scott's story to his gabble, and having bluntly inquired my name, he 'introduced me to his circle': this consisted of a considerable family party. His son made no pretence of æsthetic interest; his talk was all of hotels and food and motor-cars. One of the daughters appeared to have right ideas, and suffered for it by being required to see sights for all. The father put her through an extraordinary examination as to how many churches and galleries they had visited, and when. The placing of the cathedral day at Wednesday instead of Tuesday he reproved as gravely as if she had forgotten the existence of such a place; when the catalogue was complete he gave me a triumphant nod as much as to say he rather fancied they had not come abroad for nothing. One sensible remark he made: the girl said something about the most

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beautiful thing in the world; he gallantly declared that there was nothing on earth to compare with the natural beauties of his native land, and appealed to me for corroboration. As I was bored and wanted an excuse for going upstairs, I said I thought sleep was the most beautiful thing in nature. He peered at me and said, 'In your country do they class highest what is the very negation of life?' And I was ashamed.

It was a typical speech; Americans are so very much alive and awake, and so intent on getting every jot and tittle of value out of existence; I believe them to be the most pleasure-loving people on this planet. This does not deny their amazing energy in business; they are never languid in any pursuit; but as far as I can judge, they work with the sole object of making money to spend. I do not see the steady-going application given as a matter of tradition by the Brothers Cheeryble, nor the commercial pride of Mr. Dombey. We all know the respect of an Englishman for his firm; even the feudal devotion of an old employé; my impression of

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Americans is that they illustrate the Proverb, 'He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.' His object is to become rich, and that without delay. He has his eye on the present and immediate future, not the years to come, much less the traditions of the past. Don't think this is said in a supercilious or derogatory spirit. By no means; I admire their energy, their zest, the absence of weariness and of the blasé tone; their determination to make full use of their hours upon earth and live their lives with a vengeance. They have a perfect relish for enjoyment, and our slower and closer temperaments are sometimes perturbed by the exuberance of an expansiveness which is not ours. It would be as foreign to this man's nature to sit apart and read in new and exciting scenes as it would be to mine to go and relate to a stranger all that I had seen and all that I thought and felt.

It is curious to find how one adapts oneself to surroundings. At home I am rather a thrifty soul, rather miserly in small matters, and the unfolding of a five-pound note is a

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solemn operation ; here I enter Cook's office and draw hundreds of francs without a scruple. My one care is to have plenty of money to carry me along, and I become a prodigal for the time. I should like to ask Mr. Cook what gold reserve he keeps ; it appears to me that one may enter any of his branch offices and demand sovereigns to an unlimited extent without fear of disappointment. Moses and he share the world's record as experts in transport, and he only fails to excel the former in that he cannot dry up the waters of the sea and obviate the misery of shipboard.

My British pride suffers its customary pang when I remark the absence of paupers in these cities. It is true that in some countries the standard of poor life is so low that one is not moved by passing shabbiness and raggedness as one is by the slouching depravity of London wreckage. But in the great cities and towns of the Continent one never meets them. They must be there. Assuming better conditions of employment, more rigid police supervision, the most efficient social administration, there must

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nevertheless be those who through idleness, vice, or incapacity, sink into destitution. Such spectacles are distressing no matter where they be; but specially grievous is it to reflect that in our land of vaunted wealth and progress they are incomparably more numerous and conspicuous and perhaps more squalid than in any Western community, unless it be in Southern Spain.

XLIII.

ANOTHER curious effect of travelling is that it cultivates self-help. In England I am entirely dependent on my faithful William, without whom I can neither leave my home nor live in it. Here it seems as natural and easy to pack and unpack my luggage and look after it in transit, and generally to take care of my property and myself, as it is to dress and undress, and wash, and walk, and eat.

I have been continually moving. I contemplated staying at some of the smaller

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capitals of the East, but decided otherwise. A view of them from the train satisfied me : which may be foolish and unenterprising ; but I have not unlimited time. It is difficult to realise that in these insignificant places, no more imposing than one of our small cathedral towns, events can happen which threaten the peace and security of Europe. They only impress me with sincere pity for our diplomats who are condemned to reside in them ; in their place I should groan, ' All hope abandon . . . ' They must find it difficult to keep a sanguine spirit or believe in the prospects of advancement. No doubt each community has its interests and its lessons to teach, but I prefer the more wide and obvious manifestations of such a centre as Constantinople.

This to me is the most interesting of cities : Turkey is a medley of comedy and pathos ; the former predominates during the approach, with a strong dash of inconvenience. At the frontier there is the scrutinizing of passports and the farcical formality of a medical examination. A mosquito has lately been

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operating on me, and I was afraid this might be considered suspicious ; but I passed muster. As the capital draws near, a series of shabby sentries guard the line at intervals, presumably to supplement the Customs precautions and put a stop to any undesirable immigration. It is difficult to believe that they are intended for the safety of the passengers and a protection from attack. At the terminus the fun develops : one is warned against trying to import any book which discusses or criticises Islamism or the Sultan, guide-books of course included. I came laden with guide-books and several works specially designed to inform me about the religion and rule within the Empire. These, with a quantity of cigarettes, they passed through the douane complacently ; but they thought they had me with a piece of the *Times* which I had used for wrapping up my tooth-powder ; on this they held a conference, and decided to retain it, promising to restore it to me if I would leave my address. I have been wondering ever since what it was that disturbed them. I can only surmise that they

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found an advertisement of cigarettes and took me for a commercial traveller, or some notice of Turkish baths, and suspected me of mischievous innovations.

The pathos begins when you leave the station. Their Westminster Bridge is a construction of scrap-iron and old sleepers from some bankrupt railway, such as you might make for temporary use if you were enlarging the lake in your park and wanted easy access across the river. However, they seem well content and not a little proud of it. The population is so dense that one feels that the housing problem must surely have reached its climax here. The use of colour conceals the raggedness of men's attire; the condition of the roads is such that it is often necessary to get out of your cab and walk; the main thoroughfares are bad enough, the suburbs are almost inaccessible. The dogs which swarm in the streets of Pera are emblems of decay: filthy, lazy, quarrelsome, cowardly, always yelling; in fact, degradation incarnate. It is a theory that they are semi-sacred and that people

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feed them in piety and offer them no injury or molestation. Even here backsliding is apparent, and a boy who thinks he is unobserved will pelt them with all the spirit of a Christian. Neglect of principle does not stop here; I am assured that a Turk can and does get as drunk as a Briton, and that defiantly, declaring that it is not the particular sin for which his salvation is put in jeopardy.

Again, I had looked forward with curiosity to beholding an entire population fall prostrate in prayer when the cry of the muezzin was heard from the minaret. When I went to Brusa I made a special point of seeing this, because the situation was more Oriental and better fitted for such a scene. I waited patiently under more than one minaret, but never a summons came. Here in Constantinople I did find what I wanted. From a high tower above a thronged and busy street a muezzin did at the hour of sunset protrude his head and utter his plaintive scream, to which the jabbering crowd below paid no more attention than the mangy dogs that

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sprawled upon the roadway. Noise and squalor and crowds, these represent to my understanding the modern Byzantium; the discipline and devotion of Islamism I do not recognise.

Let me make a large exception in favour of the selamlık, the Sultan's weekly church parade. On a slope outside the palace grounds his mosque stands within the royal enclosure. The short route is lined with troops, and one's estimate of the Turkish army is sensibly raised. The Court officials remind one that the monarchy is venerable and authentic. The sun beats down from a cloudless sky upon the glittering waters of the Bosphorus, and the white cupolas and domes of Stamboul are shining above the Sea of Marmora. The ladies of the harem pass by in closed carriages, invisible. At the head of the sloping drive a dignified chamberlain proclaims his sovereign's titles and majesty, and through the gateway comes the Sultan in his state coach, surrounded by a gorgeous suite and followed by magnificent led horses. The troops cheer,

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the bands play the national anthem, which sounds like a spirited jig, and all this time a muezzin from the minaret is piping in his shrill cry the higher titles and greater majesty of Allah.

After prayers the procession is re-formed, the state coach is exchanged for a phaeton and a pair of prancing bays, which the Protector of his People handles with the assurance of a master ; a bold, blackbearded figure, singularly unlike the puny creature of our comic papers, who seems to penetrate with his piercing eyes the secret thoughts of every individual spectator as he returns to his seclusion. His stout and elderly servants waddle after him as best they may, not one of them secure in life or freedom, dependent every one of them on their sovereign's caprice and whim. I had been obliged to furnish myself with a top-hat, of aggressive French design, the best Pera could afford ; an aquascutum coat was the most suitable accompaniment that my wardrobe could afford ; and I felt a doomed man when I came under his resistless scrutiny.

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I did look suspicious, I know : in his place I should have jumped at the worst conclusions ; and I felt that the British Ambassador must have been heartily ashamed of me when I turned towards him for moral support. The morning's adventure gave a pleasant sensation of being a traveller in a strange land, and not merely a tripper to Trouville or a Monte Carlo flâneur.

I am feeling very ignorant and uneducated. My excellent guide-book is supplying me with all the knowledge which I ought to have acquired at school, and enabling me to some extent to hear with my ears and see with my eyes. Moreover, there is a remarkable creature in the hotel, who appears to know everything, and I find him invaluable, albeit a painful necessity. His voice has the sound of a slate-pencil used at the wrong angle, or a Windsor chair dragged across a stone floor ; and as he talks incessantly my nervous system is terribly deranged ; but there is no question in history, politics, religion, or art which I ask him in vain. I go so far as to say that without

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him I should miss the point and significance of half that I see. I keep him occupied, because his views on social and personal matters are contemptible. Talk he must, and hideous is the sound of it, but if it is to be so I take care that all shall be for profit. Had I needed spiritual chastisement, his literary information would have purged me of my pride. He illustrates my theory that the most notable difference between a man who is clever and one who is not lies in the faculty of memory. This man has forgotten nothing. I thought I had not entirely neglected British classics, but my mind is a blank, or at best a smudge, whilst he analyses a plot, criticises a character, points out an anachronism or an anomaly, and sprinkles his discourse with plentiful quotations. If we were set down to an examination-paper framed after this manner he would be the cultivated man of letters, whilst I should acquit myself little better than one of those unread barbarians whom I have often denounced with an intellectual pride, for which I perceive I have no justification to offer. I

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suppose it is in accordance with the laws of natural compensation that he should have such an irritating manner. Not only is his voice detestable, but his habit is this: he propounds a statement, perhaps quite trivial. I say, 'Yes.' He ejaculates, 'What?' I confirm my acquiescence. He shouts, 'Don't you agree with me?' I say 'Yes' again. He then repeats his proposition, and we take the movement *da capo*, until some fresh inspiration sets him off screaming like an express train. If to his amazing store of information were added a pleasant voice and any personal charm, he would, indeed, be a delectable companion. For travelling purposes I think I should prefer an agreeable and amiable ignoramus.

XLIV.

I DON'T know that anything could be less intelligent than my conception of Greek art. My first visit to the Vatican left me with

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ideas as confused and vague as a cockney child might derive from a visit to a tropical garden. I knew nothing of statues nor of their history. I had not troubled myself to reflect on how Athens came to Rome, nor to comprehend how originals have been preserved only in reproductions. I knew the difference in age between Praxiteles and Canova, and was ready to prefer the latter at sight. However, I did learn to admire, and sculpture galleries became a definite addition to my sources of enjoyment.

I came to Athens still so ill-informed that I expected to find the authentic work of Phidias and Praxiteles at every turn. Here goes another illusion. They made themselves immortal, but by their works ye may not know them, because, with rare exceptions, they have vanished.

Everybody ought to come here, if it be for twenty-four hours only, for the purpose of seeing the Acropolis. From my youth up I have been taught to praise certain forms and methods of decoration, and to call them

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‘Adam.’ I dare say this suggests to the unlearned nothing but the garden of Eden ; and, indeed, they would be little more ignorant than many of us. The Adam brothers only reproduced the Parthenon designs, as did Palladio, and Wren, and Inigo Jones, and every one else whose work survives. This single mound is the cradle of all art : the intelligence, study, and earnestness of mankind have failed to produce anything to replace it as a standard of beauty and grace : the best that can be done is to copy and borrow *in æternum*. Not content with borrowing, by the way, we English have stolen ; and my guide, pointing to certain blanks or substitutes, reminds me that the missing parts may be seen in our British Museum, which, with some shame, I admit to be true.

I am very glad I went to Athens, but the getting to and fro is sorry work. Happily we had smooth seas ; but there were many discomforts. I detest the confinement of ship life, the meals at inconvenient hours, and the long dreary evenings after a nasty dinner at

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half-past six. I never feel well at sea, and it conveys to me no idea of the rest for which it is recommended. Irritation and impatience, rather, are my sensations. Moreover, I had a most tiresome companion in my cabin. He resented the presence of some biting animal in his berth, and spent most of the night in striking matches and trying to impale the intruder on a toothpick. I was kept awake by these manœuvres, and had to watch him working away like a Scotchman spearing salmon by torchlight. In the morning my late sleep was interrupted much too early by his getting up. Not that his toilet was elaborate; indeed, he seemed to carry no requisites, for I found him using my brushes. He went off at Corfu, and I was content to let bygones be bygones.

Corfu possesses the elements of earthly beauty more abundantly than any place with which I have a visiting acquaintance. If I possessed more energy and resolution I should be tempted to come and make my home here. I need not entirely lose my English proclivities,

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because our occupation has left an indelible mark in the game of cricket, which is the favourite and constant pastime of the youth of the island.

One can't resist some patriotic conceit at the appearance wherever one goes of the white ensign. No matter what our new pessimism may decry, it is not yet too late to be amazed at the ubiquity of Britain upon the face of the waters and the land. We have taken our foreign possessions for granted; but they become significant realities when one finds, in the course of one's travels, a British garrison or a British colony at every second stage—at Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, at Aden, Colombo, Hong Kong, throughout India, and Australia, and Canada—until one is half ashamed that the United States are allied to us now in nothing but origin and tongue. Here it is not unpleasant to behold citizens of all countries training their glasses wherever we go upon our ships. I sometimes wonder whether they are as surely satisfied of our degeneracy and decay as we ourselves profess to be. Whatever be the truth, I admit no

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falling off in our sailors. It has pleased an all-wise and all-powerful Press to bestow on them the epithet 'breezy.' Weather may be 'breezy,' men may be 'wheezy'—the two must not be confounded; but sailors undoubtedly carry an invigorating freshness about with them. To the men of the fleet nothing seems to come amiss, not even the Acropolis. An officer on our boat, invalided home, told me that he overheard one of his men sum up his impressions with a laconic, 'Bill, this must have been blooming fine when it was new.' Nor are the officers easily disconcerted. We anchored at Corfu rather late in the morning, and our passenger at once hailed a torpedo-destroyer lying near. A boat came alongside, and off he went. Breakfast was immediately produced, although he and his host had both breakfasted an hour or so ago. I could see them sitting on their tiny deck-space, and the meal proceeded with great energy, regardless of the fact that the luncheon-hour on H.M.S. is usually about noon. Caged up in this vessel, where there is scarcely room

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to turn round and none at all to walk about. the British sailor is prepared to eat or go hungry, work like a slave or lounge in idleness, take fair weather or foul, and be for ever at the mercy of defective machinery or hazardous navigation, accommodating himself to each and all as they come, sanguine, modest, brave, loyallest of men, and so much given to hospitality that no laws of digestion may be permitted to prevent an extra meal here and there when a friend comes on board.

Possibly we like to idealise our seamen in memory of the English 'worthies' celebrated by Froude, although I protest he might have belauded them without vilifying their descendants. So much is he *laudator temporis acti* that one might almost suppose that he wrote for the purpose rather of condemning the present than glorifying the past.

I have lived long enough now to be satisfied that no man's judgment is of abiding value. In my note-book is a catalogue of predictions unfulfilled and opinions stultified. and my false prophets are statesmen, who talk

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of politics; soldiers, of war; city men, of finance; diplomatists, of foreign countries; journalists, of everything. I have long ceased to be a diligent reader of newspapers. It is a waste of time reading what 'able' correspondents think is going to happen or ought to happen. I want to know only what is happening and has happened, but this appears to be a minor consideration; the 'ability' consists not in recording facts, but in constructing theories out of rumours and possibilities. The British sailor, on this principle, is a sufficiently patent fact to me, and I bow to no authority who moralises on his decadence.

XLV.

I DON'T think there is any situation more depressing than the hour after luncheon in an hotel on a wet day. Somehow the morning never seems intolerable: the brain is fresh and alert, and one can read with pleasure; moreover, there is always the hope of improvement

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outside. But after lunch there comes the torpor of digestion, less prospect of a clearing in the sky, and an interval that looms like eternity betwixt this and dinner-time. One feels forlorn and homesick. In his own abode a man feels safe and comfortable amongst his household gods; it may be as modest and prosaic as you please, but it is a consecrated place and sanctuary. Here there is an overwhelming sense of loneliness and desolation. At home, moreover, one can go out in all weathers, because, no matter how wet and muddy one may be, there is always somebody at home to clean and dry things properly. Here, if one comes in dirty and drenched, one's boots and garments are likely to bear traces of it until travelling days are done. It is true that in a great city there is always something to see, and, if there be a gallery or museum large enough, one can find occupation until the return of reading mood, which, in all well-regulated minds, should prevail between tea-time and dinner. Not that I am a tea-man. I have often heard servants reviled for

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requiring beer at eleven ; I see nothing worse in that than drinking tea at five. They are both between-meal refreshment, neither of them necessary, both of them detrimental to good appetite and sound digestion. But, assuming that the time marks a recognised period, what am I to do meanwhile in this rain ? The places I wish to visit are far apart, it is sorry work paddling along wet pavements, and I have a curious prejudice against driving about in cabs. They involve loss of exercise and waste of money, and I only use them under protest when I must.

I am left in stupid admiration of a family party of Teutonic origin whose occupation is definite enough. I have been watching them at lunch, and wondering how they do it. It is the custom of their country to dine at mid-day ; they observe their national habit, and compound with foreign ideas by dining late as well. Young and old alike have been drowning themselves in champagne and burying themselves in mountains of solid food. *Madame mère* is prodigious ; she partakes liberally,

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with an occasional encore, of every dish, then has a copious drink of champagne, a little pause for refreshment, and so to work again with ardour unabated. Her person is the reverse of Euclid's line, she represents breadth without length, and her chin is one endless undulation. Her face betokens little apprehension of passing events, and she is evidently not addicted to conversation. The father has not a picturesque or impressive air, but he seems a jolly old boy; he gobbles away heartily and 'pushes about the bottle' with a will. At present they are inflaming themselves with large cigars and divers liqueurs; their coffee-table is as full of coloured bottles as a chemist's window. Well, why not? They have come here to enjoy themselves, and this is their manner of doing it. So much money to spend, no desire to buy *objets d'art*, no particular wish to see sights, none at all for energetic pursuits, no false obligation to do things they don't want to do, no danger, so it appears, of dyspepsia. They may be pulled up by apoplexy in their midst, but at present

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their zest shows no sign of being blunted by satiety, and, whatever happens, they have their revelry of food to enliven their days. For the rest, they dawdle and chatter, and lounge or drive, and get pleasure out of life, which, after all, is the one and only object in turning tourist.

This resource is denied to me, a miserable dyspeptic. It might serve my purpose to have one frantic outbreak, and then go to bed till the weather mends; but that might, and probably would, recover long before I did.

At all events, these merry souls are more profitable to observe than a countryman of mine whom I see yonder, the picture of helpless dejection. His wife is a gloomy individual, but she, at all events, is busy with some kind of work, at which she stitches savagely. He, I gather, has no wish or purpose this afternoon, unless it be to die. I know as well as if he told me that he is cursing his folly in leaving home, and vowing that he will never do it again, if only he can get back there—a consummation which at

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present seems too happy for achievement. Dear brother Briton, we take our pleasures sadly, don't we, old man?

Again, there are a grandfather and granddaughter, presumably American, who seem happy. I think he prefers bad weather: his continual delight is to talk to women. Such fatuous rubbish as his discourse I never heard before; but it gives him enjoyment, and to-day his victims can't escape. He came in to lunch late, and was heartily rated by his wife. He said he had been having a pleasant chat with a charming young lady. 'Why can't you leave them alone?' says she; 'they don't want to be bothered with your talk,' which seemed neither to surprise nor disconcert him in the least. And now he is at it again. The girl is a nice little creature, but she makes a great deal of noise. Not being afflicted with shyness, she raids all and sundry, and will descend on any stranger for a little conversation, interrupting his or her reading or writing without compunction, usually treading on his or her toes, or otherwise inflicting personal

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damage. For her also this kind of afternoon is a golden opportunity.

A party of young ladies, looking sad and tired, are being carried off sight-seeing by a determined lady, who is evidently in charge of them. Strict attention to business is their lot. Perhaps I should do well to be resolute and follow their example: but there is no one place here in which it is worth spending a whole afternoon, and I detest this rain as a cat is supposed to shrink from wet. There is no casino where one can loiter and kill time. What shall I do? Happy thought—as Sir Frank Burnand says: Go away. The art of travel is to obey the impulse of the moment, and never suffer boredom. I am dull and depressed: I can rouse myself by packing, and be off, no matter where, by an evening train. Cook's office is next door: I will go and get his people to make up my mind for me. Truly the founder of this business ought to have a peerage or a statue, or some national recognition. He is a benefactor of his species: millions of mankind have had opened to them

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a world which would have remained entirely inaccessible but for him. His reward, perhaps, ought to be international, subscribed for to a large extent by all the hotel proprietors upon the inhabited earth.

XLVI.

I WAS looking to-day at a picture of the fourteenth century, in which for some obscure reason a building is introduced ; the scaffolding is precisely the same as that in use now ; which set me thinking. Presumably the savage instincts of man were for food and fighting. Nothing has developed into more complex forms than cookery and armaments, whereas many of the civilised appliances of life remain unaltered. Here is an instance. Go to Pompeii, and you will find that in that remote civilisation such necessary or common things as lanterns and locks, and buckles and keys, and children's toys, were almost identical with those of to-day. I recollect, by the way,

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taking a lady of my acquaintance to the British Museum to show her this, and realising when we arrived that it was the museum at Naples which I had in mind; which vexed us both a good deal. However, it enabled me to insist on my point without fear of contradiction.

It is remarkable, but not really astonishing. No one questions the ingenuity of those early craftsmen: a community capable of producing buildings and statues and designs which have never been rivalled might surely be capable of inventing simple contrivances which would never need improvement. Utility, it is true, was not their strong point: their villas had neither electric light nor telephones, and they had little need of patent laws; but for ordinary purposes they cannot have been incompetent: they liked to live in safety and in comfort according to their ideas. One cannot take the most superficial glance at their history without perceiving that their social problems were identical in principle with our own: art, literature, and the drama were their cherished interests and pursuits, as they are ours, the

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advantage not lying with us. Politics and the law were the occupations of their ambitious and clever men. The introduction of Trade Unions and the recent development of domestic legislation have accentuated the contrast, but I believe that a striking analogy could be drawn between the eighteenth century of the Christian Era and any period before that era dawned. If it be objected that the relation between classes was more distinct, it is only necessary to look at France. What in ancient history could have been more absolute than the privilege and the servitude of the anti-Revolution days; and what more savage and barbarous for that matter than the vengeance when it came? It is noteworthy, moreover, that in no age was intellect more highly esteemed than it was in degenerate France. The courts of those Bourbons were not sunk in swinish depravity: wit, grace, culture were passports to any man of spirit. Morals may have been not too rigid, but feeling and taste were not extinct. Religious orthodoxy suffered, but the sentiment of humanity was latent

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there. The sense of duty failed only because right-doing was out of fashion : there was corruption in public, neglect in private affairs. Voltaire and his disciples builded more surely than they knew ; but they were admired and applauded as constructors of lordly pleasure-houses, not temples of retribution. A solitary Turgot, who tried to found his house upon a rock and labour for the day's need, was a visionary born out of time.

One fact emerges clear from this vague suggestion of the past, namely, that self-indulgence is an ineradicable instinct. Men and women, with the exception of the saints and apostles who are never missing, will have as much comfort and enjoyment as the existing standard affords. We are brought up to recognise our obligations as citizens, and, ill as we may discharge them, we seldom disregard them deliberately. We don't long for the orgies of Rome, or the prodigalities of Versailles, but we do want our country houses, and our London season, and smart clothes, and good dinners, and no amount of reform

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or revolution will prevent us from having as much of them as circumstances will allow. 'Depend upon it, sir,' said Dr. Johnson, 'every state of Society is as luxurious as it can be. Men always take the best they can get.' If Lucullus and Mæcenæ could come to London now, they would be at home in five minutes: they would find little changed, except the furniture, since they were giving dinners. A courtier of the time of Louis XV. might approve of a Sunday party in one of our provincial palaces: I am afraid he would not find too much churchiness, as a rule; but he would certainly be surprised if he went outside the park gates or made any inquiries into the economy of the village. What he would think if he were taken to a political meeting in the neighbouring town is beyond imagination. We may be selfish and frivolous and pleasure-loving, and leave undone much that we ought to do; but the sense of duty does not wholly fail us, as was the case in his day. People care more than they did; and if they do less than they might, they have at all events

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the grace to be ashamed. It is not all a matter of indifference.

I don't know at what period of the world existence was most pleasant for the rich and most miserable for the poor. Not now, surely. The mob, the unemployed, the wastrel, the hopeless, the degraded are permanent throughout all ages. At the worst, none of these need die of starvation in England to-day: they are entitled to be kept alive at the public cost, if they apply to the nearest parish authority, and the modern tendency is to provide out of charitable funds or the rates for all poor and distressed persons, whether meritorious or the reverse. As for the humbler classes, nobody can pretend that they are downtrodden: short of some anarchical experiment in the equal distribution of goods, they have been granted as much freedom of action and civic rights as full as they can desire. Their lives may not be abundantly blessed, but they are not unenfranchised helots.

Whether the multiplication of amenities increases happiness for the rich is a matter of opinion. We live faster, and I don't think

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speed is pleasure. It is difficult to believe that we belong to a generation of which the veterans knew no railways. Now trains are scarcely enough for us. We travel incessantly: we fly about in motors: we are in constant communication with our neighbours by telephone, to the congestion of engagements and petty cares: we are inundated with newspapers vying with one another in the manufacture of sensations and alarms; and there is no peace on earth, until nervous exhaustion reduces us to the necessity of a rest-cure.

I think life in ancient Rome must have been more enjoyable: France, in the eighteenth century, must have been a paradise for all selfish sybarites. Upon the whole, if I could make my choice, I would live the life of Sir Roger de Coverley, with the one stipulation of a bathroom in the house.

It is foolish to be always sighing for the past: people are fond of deploring the lost happiness of youth, but I observe that the young are usually in a great hurry to be grown up. Likewise we shake our heads over the

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badness of the times, but I don't know that I should prefer Plantagenet time, when heads shook from constant risk of being chopped off, or broken in civil war; or Tudor times, which were little better; or Stewart times, which were tyrannous and corrupt; nor a century ago, when the profligacy in high places and misery below were as acute as at any period in the world's history. Mr. Pepys has left a highly-coloured picture of his period. It was not bad fun, perhaps, but we should probably consider it an uncomfortable slipshod existence. Charles II. is the most attractive feature in that retrospect. What an amusing blackguard he was, and how fortunate. After his share of adversity, he came home on the crest of reaction; he presided over the most immoral court in our history, sauntered along in utter self-indulgence, and died before a disgusted nation was ready to send him packing again. He said two or three things so good that they have survived two centuries, and left it to his brother James to suffer for convictions with which he himself had only coquetted.

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‘God hath made man upright,’ saith the preacher, ‘but they have sought out many inventions.’ If the inventive faculty be a falling away from grace, we are indeed a degenerate people. We have won dominion over space and time, but I don’t see that it makes us happier; the truth is that all the added facilities minister to bodily activity, not mental and spiritual rest. I once saw the home of a Scotchman in a remote corner of Australia. He had married a Maori wife, and retired there to rear his dusky brood; no doubt he had reverted more or less to a savage condition, but I dare say he rose up and lay down each day as contented and healthy-minded as any man in Mayfair. Doctor Johnson did not think much of this kind of ‘simple life’: ‘It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim, “Here am I with this cow and this grass, what being can enjoy greater felicity?”’ In certain moods I should be inclined to answer, ‘None.’ Only the first step entails the sacrifice, and when homesickness has worn off, life adapts itself to the

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new channel and runs a smoother course; shallow and narrow it may be, but surely unpolluted. You may call it cowardly, a shirking of responsibility. What then? How many of our acquaintance when they come to die can honestly say they have done good work in the world? The man who has worked hardest has only stored up riches for his own household; the successful politician has done what half his countrymen regard as positive mischief; the distinguished soldier has at best been engaged in slaying his fellow-man; the men of arts and letters have delighted many, but themselves most of all; those who have led uneventful, exemplary lives have left no mark; those who have wrought and achieved something definite for the amelioration of their fellow-creatures—well, how many of these energetic and self-sacrificing gentlemen do we know?

Being much alone, like Tiny Tim, one thinks odd things, and the puzzle of existence seems ever more complicated; one's own fingers grow ever more clumsy and vacil-

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lating in the endeavour to arrange the pieces, until they leave it in despair, and one sits with folded hands, listless and inert.

What distresses me beyond all things is that there is so little happiness amongst the prosperous in the land. If it be the lot of the many to suffer and the few to profit, it would be something to know that the latter at all events enjoyed themselves; but outside the limit of very young people there is a universal air of weariness and discontent. Merriment is forced, enjoyment is a perfunctory habit, men and women in private are generally moody and depressed. It is an evil sign: we English are losing heart; we no longer believe in our destiny or ourselves; we are pessimists all; the national spirit is cowed, and we have allowed ourselves to proclaim our own decay. That fourteenth-century scaffolding! We are building now as they built then, and all that was best and noblest of their work remains for our envy and admiration. We may be more cunning with our electricity and drains, but we are no wiser craftsmen. Which is an

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allegory. I try and unravel the skeins of this tangled life: some threads of gold have been there all the time, but they are overlaid with so many of our own weaving that we lose sight of them, and forget that they exist.

But metaphors don't help. What I mean is that we seldom get beyond a bewildered contemplation of the phenomena before our eyes: to be as gods, knowing good and evil, we must 'see life steadily and see it whole.' Other things besides scaffolding and Pompeian toys are for all time: to put it in a sentence, the relation between man and his fellow-man is the beginning and end of human existence; the problems and perplexities are eternal. Selfishness and greed caused all the trouble in the Garden of Eden, and they have been doing it ever since. Every man wants to improve his position: throughout the Bible it is against love of riches that most rebukes are levelled, albeit the power of riches is sometimes frankly admitted.

Charity is not a fundamental impulse; it is organized discipline. Patriotism itself is a

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form of non-natural sacrifice. One sees this in the case of a boy who in his heart would rather distinguish himself in a losing game than fail personally on a winning side. We must have a leader to venerate: we like to see our sovereign in a gold coach, surrounded by Life Guards, and we want to be as high in the social scale as we can. I have seen French boys with the name of the President on their hat ribbons, not 'Vive la République.' Hero-worship is innate in us, and with it comes the desire to be a hero; at all events, to be worshipped. Even our affections are selfish: nothing pains us more than to find them unreciprocated. In Christianity alone lies our salvation. Other religions proclaim the doctrine of *sauve qui peut*; we are enjoined to help one another. But people don't go to church nowadays, and clergymen, instead of preaching spiritual sermons, are apt to talk of things they don't understand. Ecclesiastes, the Preacher, knew human nature and laid down precious precepts. The only modern preachers who arrest attention are those who rail against

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the sins of society, about which they often talk nonsense, or who by exaggeration confound good sense, or waste indignation over venial trifles.

Meanwhile we take everything for granted, and never try to seek out truth for ourselves. I don't know why we should or how it can be expected of people who regard our Parliamentary system as the best and most practical method of governing a modern state; seven hundred gentlemen talking incessantly, not with any idea of influencing a verdict as an advocate intends to convince, but for the sake of airing opinions: our public services at the mercy of political whims or shiftings, or, if left unmolested, then stultifying our theory of government by contrast. In forms and trifles we are equally complacent. We cherish our King's speeches and loyal addresses of gracious thanks with all the faith once reposed in the touch for king's evil. In an utterly uncere-
monious age we still persist in entering and leaving the dining-room in strict obedience to the table of precedence; we commence all

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our letters with a term of endearment which would be impertinent in speech, and retain the meaningless subscription of obedient servant. We send our sons to be educated at places where there is no pretence to teach them things which they want to know, and only a conventional routine of study for other things of which they have no imperative need, and, as a rule, no capacity for acquisition. We tax all our resources in order to preserve the lives of criminals, lunatics, and incurables, and see nothing illogical in devoting our best to the bloodshed of battle. We habitually make engagements and attend ceremonies which we know we shall not enjoy, because it is the accepted idea of pleasure. We are deceived and disillusionised every day, and wake next morning eager to be reillusioned and to deceive ourselves once more. To a great extent we are permitted to construct each for himself the house of life, yet we can do nothing more original than employ the scaffolding methods of the fourteenth century, and build as each generation has built, meanwhile losing,

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not increasing, the sense of piety and beauty, and leaving very seldom to posterity any memorial of our courage or our worth.

XLVII.

I WENT to the Opera last night to hear *Othello*. I say hear advisedly. If you think of it, an opera to look at is the culmination of nonsense. Drama, I suppose, is intended to illustrate life and passion : in real life people don't fling their arms about and shout, unless their passion is ungovernable, and then they don't do it melodiously, or in time to music. A stage chorus is the silliest spectacle on earth. Little better is the tenor screaming his addresses, or the bass bellowing his secrets. And they don't spare you their quality in the acting line. These gentlemen were as conscientious as if they were playing the original tragedy of Shakespeare. Of course I did not understand a word they said ; nor, for the matter of that, should I have been greatly

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edified if they had been singing in English ; nor, again, did their gestures help one to understand their emotions. As old Emerson once said of a ranting English tragedian, it was a Garrickature of acting. Personally, I am not sufficiently musical to enjoy an entire opera. Half a loaf is better than too much bread, and I prefer moderation. The torpor of repletion is unpleasant, and I have not enough appetite to be greedy. I should like indeed to take my entertainment in slices, because I know where the plums are, and the pleasant plan would be to cut and come again. I have tried that, but it usually resulted in my returning to find I had just missed what I desired most : consequently, the only course is to sit at the feast until your taste is gone, and then retire, no matter what good things are yet to come.

Going out I ran against Mark Kenyon and his wife ; they asked me to go to lunch with them to-day, which I did. She always reminds me of the foam on the social sea ; so buoyant and transparent, and always on the

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crest of the wave. Let us hope that no angry breaker will ever throw her up high and dry upon the shore. He is a good fellow, and knows a great deal about art. She is also a good fellow, and knows very little; but she likes to make out that she is learned, consequently these expeditions do not depress her high spirits. She asked me why on earth I travelled alone. I replied because I had no one on earth to bring with me. She said that was my fault. I said, 'Probably.' Then she spoke of our last meeting at Brockmoor. I had enjoyed that party; the house was comfortable, the country exquisite, and the company agreeable.

'But you weren't very sociable or amiable,' she said. 'I remember you stuck in the library all the morning and mooned about by yourself in the afternoon.'

It was quite true. The rest of them dawdled and gossiped all day. I read and walked when I was not wanted, but at all hours of assembly I thought I had been convivial enough. I had almost flattered myself

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that I was contributing something to the social stock. Yet I was unsociable and un-amiable, so it seems. That was the undesigned impression I made upon them: that consequently is my true character. If I had forced myself to chatter and lounge all day, there would have been both effort and constraint, and I should have been a public nuisance. So that it ends in my being unfit for polite society. In fact I am a mixture of Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington; I have no manners and no small talk.

‘Why does one never see you?’ she went on. ‘Why do you bury yourself alive?’

‘Because I am neither sociable nor amiable,’ I answered.

‘You are so absurdly touchy! No wonder you quarrel with people.’

‘I avoid it by burying myself alive.’

‘You should not be so sensitive.’

‘I only take the impress of truth.’

She paused a moment. ‘But you always want to do as you like,’ she declared, obstinately.

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'Do you always want to do what you don't like?'

'But you must do as others do.'

'Or avoid them.'

'That's not the way to get on.'

'It is a way to get out.'

'You have no business to want to get out,' she said, impatiently.

'Then I retire hurt.'

'What have you to complain of?'

'Nothing; it was you complained of me.'

'But why don't you try and make yourself agreeable?'

'It is useless to fly in the face of Nature.'

'It is no use running away from your friends, anyhow.'

'I didn't have to: nobody ran after me.'

'You could hardly expect them to do that.'

'No, their tendency was rather in the opposite direction.'

'But you might have kept up with them.'

'By running after them again?'

'Can't any friendships last?'

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‘Those who can keep on running are said to last.’

‘Then there are no such things as fast friendships?’

‘Yes, those that end soonest.’

‘So you prefer solitude and don’t want friends?’

‘My want of friends makes me solitary.’

‘Doesn’t your solitude make you want to make friends?’

‘Is it a simple matter of supply and demand?’

‘You would have plenty if you chose.’

‘Not if I chose too nicely.’

‘That would be nobody’s fault but yours.’

‘My faults, rather.’

‘What do you expect of friends, then?’

‘Nothing now.’

‘I mean what would you require?’

‘That they be found faithful, as the Bible says.’

‘To cling closer than a brother? Doesn’t the Bible say that too?’

‘Brothers only cling close from force of

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association. Let them live apart and they become strangers, or have business differences and they become enemies. Cain and Abel were brothers, so were Jacob and Esau.'

'Well, then, sisters!'

'Did not Cleopatra murder her brother, so as to be sole sovereign? I think so.'

'You are impossible.'

'You began by telling me that. Dizzy somewhere says that nothing is impossible to those who really care. I suppose people never really cared about me.'

'How can they if you keep them at a distance?'

'It ought to lend me an enchantment.'

'You seem to think of nothing but yourself.'

'Nobody else ever thought much of me, so far as I could see.'

'Don't think me unkind, but are you not getting rather selfish?'

'Probably,' I said, as if it were a new idea, 'I am prematurely old. Children are selfish. One tries to fight against it as one grows up, but the habit often creeps on again in old age.'

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I relate this dialogue to show what unexpected weapons Fate employs. This charming lady, meaning to be sympathetic and kind, wounded me with a series of home-thrusts, and gave her blade a murderous twist each time. Unsociable, unamiable, cowardly, prejudiced, selfish—she ticked them off neatly, and left me only grateful for being spared the catalogue of certain other deadly sins of which I am conscious. It is true that I can avoid her, and such as her; but whither can I flee to be hidden from myself?

I rather wish I had stayed longer in Venice. It is the only city on earth where there is neither dust nor noise, but there is no elbow-room. The Lido affords a promenade, but the same inevitable road day after day becomes wearisome. Moreover, I wanted to pay another visit to Florence and Rome. One takes likes and dislikes for places as one does for people, for no obvious reason, and Rome is one of my special favourites. The Campagna is a dreary place, drearier than Salisbury Plain; but somehow it appeals to me, and I

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like walking there. Perhaps the background of mountains makes the difference. And I like the streets, and beyond all things I delight in watching the sun set behind St. Peter's from the Pincian Hill. I never weary of standing by that fountain outside the gardens, where the cypress-trees form an arch, and gazing on the stately dome in black silhouette against the crimson sky. Rome to me is the most impressive monosyllable in the language: its full cadence conjures up the tremendous significance of the greatest of dead empires and the greatest of living creeds; the most romantic legends of human glory and suffering and endeavour; the richest monuments of art.

One of the most comical things ever said by a lout was the blunt comment of a disappointed visitor, 'Here, you can have Rome.'

Florence, too, has coigns of vantage that draw me: the terrace of Michael Angelo's 'David,' and the terrace at Fiesole, both dedicated to tea-drinking. As the latter is the favourite occupation of my countrywomen, so mine is panoramising—which is a good word,

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and mine own. It is most comfortable to me to be a spectator of these inexhaustible tableaux, varying with each modulation of light and cloud, continually revealing some feature or effect not noticed hitherto. It would need a mighty painter or a glorious poet to interpret all this so as to impart a tithe of their secrets or their manifestations. A man with a taste for making verses instinctively puts his thoughts into words. I won't trouble you with mine! The worst of it is that the thing is here, and one sees it and feels it, yet one cannot find the right note: rhymes and phrases don't make poetry.

‘But though all Life, all good and ill,
Be plastic to the poet's will,
And though he find in every rill
His Hippocrene;
’Tis yet from sources hidden still
And deeps unseen,
He wins, in favouring hours benign,
* * * * *
Those intimations faint and fine.’

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So says a much better poet than ever I shall be. I can praise the rill and give it a pretty adjective, and rhyme it easily; but I am afraid the sources and the deeps are not for my limited vision and my benign hour never comes.

In Florence I am tempted to make up my mind to a country house in England and to furnish it from here. Every day I see something which I should like to have in my garden or my hall; yet if ever I achieved the purchase of a house there would be nothing Italian about it, least of all the climate, and I should do better to abide by English red bricks and rude flag-stones. A Florentine palace and a Surrey cottage need their proper settings.

I forgot to tell you that my book has arrived; I have not dared to open it: my nervous suspense is grievous. Presumably you have received your copy, and I dread a letter from you, much as I desire it. And oh, the critics! It is well that I am away and have some distractions which will help to soften the asperity of the ordeal.

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XLVIII.

I DON'T desire or attempt to conceal my delight at the reception which has been given to my book. You, I well knew, would be generous and indulgent, but the public and professional verdict I dreaded. Behold, it is praise, general and lavish; praise of my book and of me, my subject, my method, and my manner, and I, the misanthrope, am translated into an optimist and an enthusiast. I won't spoil the fun by stopping to diagnose the symptoms and ascertain how much must be attributed to vanity. I can say, with truth, that my principal cause for satisfaction is that I feel I have to some extent justified my existence. A man who can produce a book which not only gives pleasure, but is of material use, has not spent his time in vain, and nobody can deny me this recognition at the hands of the critics.

Besides yourself, I sent copies only to my friend the Rector and to Miss Selby. The former writes in a fit of enthusiasm—I think

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he was fond of me—the latter sends a most sensible letter. It adds to my shame in having judged her so wrongly at the outset, doing injustice at once to her and to my discretion. Since she appreciates my work I must needs commend her; but inasmuch as hers is appreciation within the right meaning of the word, I cannot but respect her critical powers. She is a lady of taste and discernment, and possesses excellent qualities underneath that veneer which her family and surroundings had laid on.

There was nobody else who I thought would care to have it or to whom I felt encouraged to send it. I must indeed write for the public if I write at all; my private circulation would be circumscribed too narrowly.

So much elated am I that the world seems rosier than I ever thought it could be again for eyes of mine. I feel like Richard III.: 'I do mistake my person all this while.' Perhaps I am not to be one of the irreparable breakages of life, after all; I may have my uses, my interests, even a career.

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I am turning homewards in a sprightly mood. To-day I went to Versailles and walked a long time in the gardens, building many castles in the air. There was a conspiracy of circumstances in my favour: a lovely autumn day, the consciousness of homecoming, which must warm the heart of every man, no matter how forlorn. I dawdled over a delicious lunch, contrasting it as I always do with the unvaried, unattractive, unimaginative menus of England, so badly conceived and rudely served. Compare, for example, this average restaurant with its long list, its neatness, its excellent bread, its infinite resources in manipulating such ordinary things as eggs and potatoes, with our Versailles at Hampton Court, its cold beef and pickles, its veal and ham pie, its cabbage, and its flavourless bread; these for its staple hotel fare, these, and never anything but these. An omelette, a little dish of vegetables, and a fresh camembert cheese, with nice white wine and good coffee, gave me the genuine epicurean serenity and I was a happy man. I pondered, as I

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walked, on your constant adjurations to me to get married. Well, why not? I had turned over a new leaf, I had recovered confidence, the world was full of kind and honest people after all, and I was to take my share of its good things. Why should I not have my home and friends like other people, and be married and live happily ever afterwards?

So well occupied was I that I came back to Paris later than I had intended, and found myself unprepared with an evening's entertainment. I went to dine at a café and found the Udneys with the Tremaynes and Jack Norris at the next table. In my new spirit of exaltation I was tempted to attach myself to them and go wherever they were going; but it would not do, I did not belong. It was not a formal party, of course, and, had I been in the movement, I should certainly have been swept in. As it was, nothing happened beyond a certain amount of nodding and some conventional inquiries as they went out. I don't suppose it occurred to any of them to make me welcome; I am sure that none of them

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have heard of my book, or would have thought of reading it if they had : all of which came on me like a spurt of cold water. In my present mood I would have given anything to have been greeted as a comrade, not as an alien. And if they had but congratulated me on the book, if they had shown consciousness of its existence, no matter how ignorant of its contents, then, indeed, would my cup of happiness have been overflowing.

However, I am no longer afraid of opening the interesting volume ; I find special satisfaction in reading the passages which have been praised ; and there remains my infallible resource of making confidences to you, so that I have not been without occupation after all.

I wonder whence comes this love of journalizing ; for that is what it amounts to—an irresistible wish to communicate my thoughts. When a girl attitudinizes before a mirror, she does it for her sole delight. She rejoices in her youth and beauty, and in the contemplation of these finds content. I can't enjoy my thoughts alone like that ; I must have a chosen

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audience. I don't feel guilty of attitudinizing, anyhow ; these ebullitions are certainly natural and unrestrained. You may say I am selfish and vain because I require attention ; so is the lady vain in studying her charms, and selfish in parading them for her own delectation. It is a paradox ; our methods are contrary, but we have a common motive. It is the social instinct in both cases ; she wants to be looked at, I to be listened to ; and she, bless her ! is more likely to give and get gratification than I am. A face and form are not essentially better worth contemplating than a heart and intellect, but beauty is not so rare in the former as in the latter ; moreover, you only look at one, whereas you must look into the other, and that is a more exacting and less attractive process. To be beautiful is to be admired and popular by right of birth ; to be cultivated and stimulating is to win rare and hesitating recognition by dint of much labour and devotion.

One is always told that to a woman love is the vital element, that she only becomes intel-

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lectual or philanthropic if her life is starved through lack of romantic nourishment. I doubt it. I don't see all the good-looking women of the world engrossed in conjugal affection or adventitious courtships; but their physical advantages do make them popular, and so afford to them opportunities for enjoyment and occupation which are denied to ill-favoured females, who are accordingly forced to seek an outlet for their energies elsewhere. The one thing a woman cannot stand is being bored, and it seems to me that she desires amusement more than love. On the other hand, my observations point to the fact that domestic felicity is what men most dearly prize. Without this, their appetite for love in its manifold forms is insatiable. They begin by being laughed at for some youthful attachment which is, in truth, neither ridiculous nor discreditable, and after many adventures, reputable and the reverse, they end, as often as not, with an escapade which is either very ridiculous or thoroughly discreditable.

A man has less reason to be bored than a

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women. From the day he leaves school he is his own master, and has a wider range of choice, or he is obliged to work, or he is ambitious and has public life to engage in, or he is lazy and does not feel bored when he has nothing to do ; in fact, he does not depend to the same extent on other people for his pursuits. But it does not follow that his affections are less lively, or his desire for tender intimacy is less acute. I sometimes read urgent appeals for a tax on bachelors, which I cannot but ascribe to impatient spinsters, not because they are illogical in argument so much as because I can think of no other class who would entertain this animosity, unless, indeed, it be the unsuccessful Benedicks who would like to see all free men penalized. These advocates, whoever they may be, assume that bachelors are all men who could marry if they would, but are deterred by selfishness. They ignore the fact that many are debarred by poverty, and that improvident marriages are culpable ; that many are denied the lady of their desire, and have no inclinations else-

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where, and that loveless marriages are unprofitable; that others are prevented by physical or constitutional infirmities, and that for these marriage is criminal. Finally, bachelors are blamed for losing the supreme joys of life, as if that were a crime for which they ought to be punished, and not a deprivation for which they ought to be pitied.

Good looks, of course, make a greater difference to a woman than to a man, but, I repeat, it is a fallacy to say, as we do, that with a man it is a matter of no moment. If so, why do we continually hear a man's appearance criticised: he has lost his looks, he has grown coarse, or bald, or fat, or developed a double chin, or that he is extraordinarily ugly or remarkably handsome. Are not most of the favourites of Society good-looking men? Very few men have I known wholly indifferent to their appearance. They take exercise to prevent obesity, and anoint their heads to postpone baldness; they wear their clothes with some exactness, and set store upon an elegant moustache. Take them altogether, they are

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more careful of their bodies than their souls. Due attention to the former is permissible for reasons of hygiene, but I am afraid that it is effect rather than efficiency that is the motive, except in the case of hypochondriacs.

But when all is said and done, married life is the thing. A happy bachelor at best has only half lived; he goes to his grave an incomplete man. If he has been spared sorrow and vexation and responsibilities, he has only avoided man's ordained destiny; he has also missed his noblest opportunities. His life can claim nothing but a happy immunity, such as a schoolboy enjoys who knows nothing of the realities of life, who is pleasantly ignorant of care, who has not learnt to read foreign news with apprehension, or study City intelligence with dismay. He hears and sees things, but does not perceive that they matter, or can possibly affect him and his way of living. He is to be envied to some extent, but he is not yet an appreciable member of society. Personally I envy him with all my soul, remembering my own joyous youth; but I don't pre

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tend to respect him much. Then he grows up and goes on to the Stock Exchange (as a rule), where he finds little to do if there is no gambling fever prevalent, and grumbles at the slackness of business, and gets much more pity than a briefless barrister ever receives, as if it were the duty of the public to be for ever speculating, whereas they are not expected to be for ever rushing into litigation ; and, to sum up, he finds the newspapers full of grave matter, and no longer mere chronicles of sport. In fact, he has become a man, but never the complete man until he has merged himself in the individuality of a woman.

XLIX.

I ONCE knew a man who unexpectedly came into a large sum of money under the will of a remote relation ; he paid it into a bank, and next day the bank failed. When he heard of this he laughed heartily. It was known that he needed the money, and it was

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suggested to him that his mirth was inappropriate. 'If I did not laugh,' he explained, 'I should certainly have to blow out my brains.'

I do not wish to make your flesh creep; but my predicament is in a measure analogous to his. Such saving sense of humour as I may possess is now my only cover from despair.

I played a trick which perhaps was not quite honest and not at all wise. I was tempted to put you to the proof, and grievous is my punishment. You thought I was going to violate convention and offend the proprieties, and so you disown me. You say that if I marry Miss Selby you have done with me, that Harry tells you she is impossible, and that I must not expect you to accept the situation. I did not intend to try to marry Miss Selby or any one else, it was a false insinuation on my part, designed to ascertain what you would do. Any one can support a friend who is obviously right, it is not every one who will support a friend who is possibly wrong.

Let me point out that I may perhaps

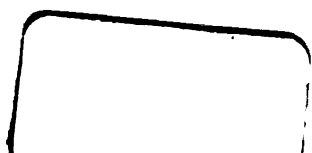
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